Vice-Chancellor’s Column

The 2002 academic year has commenced, and it has been enjoyable to meet so many new students and to welcome back continuing students.

Our commencement ceremonies were very successful, and a welcome new feature this year was the excellent attendances at Faculty based functions, in addition to the popular welcome at the Ourimbah Campus on the Central Coast. New students have been warmly welcomed and inducted into the operations of the University. I hope they have gained a good working knowledge of the facilities and services that are on offer and have met with key staff responsible for providing those services.

Courtesy of Newcastle City Council and the University, we had a first for welcoming international students this year: a civic reception and welcome at the city hall. This was an outstanding success, resulting from an idea arising from the International Students Forum and brought forward by the President of the Forum, Mr Tabane Ndlovu. It was well attended by political and business leaders of the city, and by University staff and students. Many thanks to the Newcastle City Council and to Mr Ndlovu for this innovation and welcome to our international students.

A consistent message this year has been that our university has become one of the first preferences of all universities based in NSW and the ACT, and demand this year is more competitive than ever before. Prospective students are not only recognising our traditional strengths in professional courses, such as medicine, law, communications and media arts, engineering, education and architecture, but for the first time in many years, both the Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science programs will be filled, due to an increase in high quality applications.

This year we made 6271 Main Round offers for 106 individually named programs, of which 49 required a University Admissions Index (UAI) score of 90 or more. In addition, the UAI for every degree program except three has either increased or remained the same as for 2001.

The most popular degree program for 2002 was the new Bachelor of Physiotherapy degree, with more than 1200 applications received for 30 places. The degree programs that are hardest to gain admission to are those that require more than a good UAI score. These include the Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Medical Radiation Science programs, which require admission tests and interviews, and the Bachelor of Music program, which in addition to a satisfactory UAI, also requires an audition.

New students were informed of our ‘new’ structure, and the higher level of commitment this year to improving the quality of our teaching and research programs, as well as the many other services and support programs we provide. They were also made aware of a major change in organisational structure from eleven Faculties and six Divisions in 2001, to a simpler and more streamlined structure of five Faculties (Business and Law; Education & Arts; Engineering & Built Environment; Health; and Science & Information Technology) and three Service Divisions (University Services; Research & International; and Vice-Chancellor’s Division) from 2002.

Our focus in planning and implementing the structure has been to position ourselves to best serve our students in the present and developing educational and economic environment. We also want to enhance our capacity to work in partnership with industry and the community, particularly with our regional partners in the Hunter and Central Coast. Moreover, we wish to internationalise every aspect of our operation, particularly research and teaching, so that our graduates can compete in a global market. Importantly this year, we have increased spending on information resources in the library by $1.3m to provide a total of $4.9m for 2002, which will bring us more in line with our standing as a strong research based university.

The new academic year brings new challenges and opportunities for us all. May I wish each of you an outstandingly successful and healthy 2002.

Roger S Holmes
Vice-Chancellor and President
City welcomes international students

Almost 700 international students were welcomed to the City of Newcastle last month in a civic reception held at City Hall. The students, from 47 different countries, are studying undergraduate and postgraduate programs at the University, some as exchange or study abroad students, while others are joining the International Foundation Program.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Roger Holmes welcomed the students, saying he was sure that their choice to study in Newcastle was affected by the appeal of the city as well as the University’s outstanding record of achievement in teaching and learning.

"Newcastle has a reputation as a safe and welcoming city," Roger said. "It is blessed with outstanding physical amenities, great beaches, parks and recreation areas. It has a vibrant cultural life, good theatres and plenty of entertainment for young people. Compared to other major centres in Australia the cost of living is not high."

The Vice-Chancellor said the University works cooperatively with Newcastle City Council, for the mutual benefit of residents, University staff and students. It is a major participant in the life of the city, contributing in many ways to its cultural activities in music, drama, art and in promoting debate and discussion on major issues.

Lord Mayor of Newcastle, the Hon. John Tate, said that the international students bring an invaluable cultural diversity to the city that helps the community grow as a tolerant and global society.

"This is a city that will embrace you as visitors and new residents," the Lord Mayor said. "You have landed in a wonderful city and will learn in an excellent university.

The civic reception was the brainchild of students in the International Students Forum. The President of the Forum is 30-year-old Thabani Ndlovu, who arrived in Newcastle from Zimbabwe in 1999 and spent three years completing a Bachelor of Social Science (Recreation & Tourism). This is his first year of a Bachelor of Laws degree program. Thabani was introduced to Australia by former cricket captain Allan Border.

"I was operating a safari business in Zimbabwe and Allan Border and his family were customers," he says. "We became friends and kept in contact after he left Zimbabwe, but I had no idea who he was! When he returned on another visit, I discovered he was well known in Australia, which Allan thought I had known all along. I guess he thought I was being nice to him because of who he was."

As a 'thank you' for looking after him and his family so well, Border bought Thabani an airline ticket to Australia, where he visited Queensland, the Northern Territory and South Australia. The trip convinced him to abandon plans to study in the United Kingdom and instead study in Newcastle, where he had friends.

Once Thabani completes his law degree, he hopes to return to Zimbabwe, with the ultimate goal of working for the United Nations to reform the constitutions of third world countries.

International students are major contributors to the $102 million in student expenditure generated by the University each year.

The civic reception, held on February 21 at City Hall, was attended by the Chancellor Ric Charlton, as well as city councillors and local dignitaries.
Good corporate citizens survey results

Most companies believe in giving to charity and the community but don't see it as improving their bottom line.

"This is one of the findings from a recent study by researchers from the School of Social Sciences in association with the Newcastle and Hunter Business Chambers.

Researchers Professor Mel Gray and Penny Crofts wanted to know the extent to which companies give to community groups and charities, how they decide which groups to give to, and whether they consider giving benefits their businesses.

"When companies donate, it is overwhelmingly a cash donation," Penny said. "Eighty percent of donations are cash, 61 percent goods and services, and just over 50 percent are in expertise."

Most donations to charity are tax deductible and while many businesses consider it a benefit, most didn't see it as a motivating factor for the donation. Companies thought the benefits of giving were enhanced company reputation, increased staff morale, and community acceptance.

President of the Newcastle and Hunter Business Chamber Paul Murphy says the survey results partly surprised the Chamber, which expected more emphasis on the bottom line result.

"In a market where requests for donations and sponsorships are increasing, many companies are assessing their donations more carefully," he said. "Nonetheless, these results reflect the strong sense of community that exists in Newcastle and Hunter business."

Most businesses said requests for donations were increasing each year. Nearly a quarter of respondents indicated they receive requests on at least a weekly basis.

The survey found businesses generally supported social welfare and youth organisations before sporting bodies, then education and training, followed by contributions to medicine and health groups. Almost half of those surveyed said personal networks influenced the choice of causes they supported.

When asked what limited their donations, most businesses said it was a lack of time or resources. Only 12 percent of those surveyed said a lack of tax benefits limited their giving and only five percent said it wasn't the role of business to contribute to community causes.

The project reference group was chaired by Rob Chenery, past President of the Chamber, and financed in part by an RMC grant.

The value of American summer camp

Summer camp in the United States is a 'rite of passage' for young Americans, says Dr Kevin Lyons from the School of Social Science and many Australians go to the US to take part in the ritual each year.

At the beginning of the year, it is common to see advertisements for Australians to work in American summer camps and last year alone 2000 young Australians took up the opportunity.

Kevin travelled to the US to study the effects of working in the camps and how Americans perceived Australians in that context. He says for many Australians the experience was seen as a way of supplementing independent travel. Others saw it as an opportunity to get off the tourist bus and meet ordinary American children.

Some camp workers said it was a culture shock and the regimented life became difficult to handle. Others said the long, hard working hours weren't compensated enough by the wages. However, Kevin says most of the workers he interviewed saw it as a valuable experience.

"It gave them the opportunity to work alongside people from all over the world and also allowed them to share their culture with young Americans who may have very little idea what Australian life is like."

He says camp directors see Australians as skilled in recreational activities, particularly in aquatic activities such as swimming and also for leading outdoor activities like hiking and camping.

"It is not for everyone," Kevin says. "The work is hard, the hours are long and the pay is not great. But it is a way to supplement travel and meet a great variety of people from all over the world and also to discover why the summer camp is such an institution in the United States."
Mentoring program leads to jobs

Researchers from the Faculty of Health say a new program to help redundant men has been an outstanding success.

Twenty eight men from across the Hunter have completed the eight-week program, which looked at improving the mental and physical health of participants by reducing stress, improving mental and physical health, and quality of life. The men were split into groups and each group was assigned a male mentor, who ran programs such as men’s fitness and activities, a St John’s Ambulance First Aid course, dietary discussions, computing skills, and business training.

Some men have since found jobs, many are continuing to meet and several reported improved psychological wellbeing, increased confidence and skills in searching for jobs, and better social networks, reducing their feelings of isolation.

Professor Dimity Pond says the researchers are still analysing their quantitative data but the feedback from the case studies and evaluation sessions showed the program was a success.

"Many men say their self-confidence has lifted, they have acquired skills they can apply when looking for jobs, and that they have extra drive to actually look for employment," Dimity said.

The mentoring program is a collaborative effort by the University, the region’s Anglican welfare agency, Samaritans, and the Hunter Urban Network of Consumer Health. It is being made possible by $44,889 in funding through the Federal Government’s Research and Development Program for Rural and Regional Australia. The funding is being matched dollar-for-dollar by the BHP Prime Ministerial Taskforce.

The second program began recently with researchers recruiting redundant men from Newcastle, Cessnock, Muswellbrook, Maitland and Singleton to participate in the project. For more information call 4968 6736.

Some men have since found jobs, many are continuing to meet and several reported improved psychological wellbeing, increased confidence and skills in searching for jobs, and better social networks...

Fatigue in athletes often due to illness

Medical student and athlete Nicole Williams has discovered that sports fatigue and poor performance in competitive athletes is almost always related to a medical condition.

Nicole carried out the research into fatigue during a year off from her medicine studies in 2000 to undertake a Bachelor of Medical Science degree.

"Chronic fatigue is a well-known and often diagnosed problem but in the study we did, we found that the athletes who complained about fatigue were, in fact, suffering some kind of treatable illness," she said.

She concluded that GPs might overlook basic medical problems and only treat the fatigue.

"Out of the study, I developed a recommended set of tests for GPs to run on athletes presenting with symptoms of chronic fatigue, in the hope of finding what is causing the fatigue and being able to treat it."

Nicole presented her findings at the International Society of Exercise Immunology and the American College of Sports Medicine conferences in Baltimore, USA last June and won a scholarship to present the study to the Australian Medical Students Conference in Melbourne. She will complete her medical degree this year and hopes to specialise in orthopaedic surgery.

Nicole is an accomplished athlete, running competitively in middle distance events, and also finds time to squeeze in another of her accomplishments, playing flute in the Hunter Orchestra. She won the NSW Young Australian of the Year award in Science and Technology last year.

Nicole Williams
A new focus for policy

Head of the School of Policy in the Faculty of Business and Law A/Professor Martin Watts says he will increase the emphasis on policy in his School's courses, as well as seeking course innovation.

"The School brings together the disciplines of economics and politics, which were formerly part of the Department of Economics," Martin said. "We haven't taken on any additional partners in the new structure and have more or less retained our identity. We will seek to slightly change our focus in terms of policy orientation, which needs more emphasis, and we are also looking at developing initiatives in public policy."

Martin, who has taught at the University for 11 years, says that the study of economics is currently increasing in popularity, as economists around the world strive to identify solutions to global economic problems.

"People have become increasingly aware that new ideas are needed," he said. "The evidence of the past 20 years shows there has been persistently high rates of unemployment and a reduction in job security. Those who are in work may be working relatively low hours and be poorly paid. There is a lot of interesting work going on around the world to identify solutions."

Martin's own research has examined gender segregation, the costs of unemployment, the impact of deindustrialisation and recently the merits of basic income – an idea that everyone should receive a lump sum of minimum essential income each year that is not linked to work. This proposition, which is creating interest in the USA and Europe, is designed to overcome the problems of unemployment and inadequate hours of work and also to make the labour market operate more fairly.

"When it comes to policy development, it would be naive to argue that you can operate in an objective, value-free way," he said. "Equally, the sort of issues you look at and the theories you develop are conditioned by your underlying beliefs. There are clearly controversies but the processes for testing economic theories, while becoming more sophisticated, are not definitive."

According to Martin, the Centre of Full Employment and Equity (CoFFEE), which operates in the School, now provides a view that is contrary to economic orthodoxy.

"This is also reflected in our teaching, which is heterodox, covering various perspectives," he said. "A characteristic of most of those who take a heterodox view is to come to that position by understanding orthodoxy and students within the School are exposed to both points of view, which is crucial to critical thinking."

Martin, who was born in Bristol in the UK, studied economics in Essex before doing a Master's degree in econometrics in Manchester. He completed his thesis on labour markets at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver and came to Australia in 1975 to take up a lecturing position at Monash University in Melbourne, where he stayed until 1990. Needing a new challenge, he accepted a senior lecturer's post at Newcastle.

Martin says that while a theoretical basis is necessary to understand the economy, the focus of the School is applied and that there are lots of applied areas that can be developed across the University. There is scope for further growth through shared interests with the School of Social Sciences and CoFFEE has recently submitted a grant application with members of the School of Medical Practice and Population Growth.

"It's early days yet but I'm confident that the new structure will provide a productive environment to the benefit of staff and students within the Faculty," Martin said. "The School will be seeking to cooperate with other disciplines around the University in both research and teaching."
Building networks first order of business

Head of both the Newcastle Graduate Business School (NGBS) and Newcastle Business School, Professor Paul Ryder, hopes to contribute to the University's role in the regional development of the Hunter.

“My first challenge is to network strongly with the business community,” he said. “During the past four years at James Cook University, I was a member of the Cairns Regional Economic Development Corporation and I would welcome similar opportunities here in the Hunter.”

Paul, who has held management roles at a range of Australian universities including large ‘sandstone’, small regional and private institutions was attracted by the challenge of coordinating both undergraduate and postgraduate business education at Newcastle.

“I’m looking forward to developing synergies from the relationship for the benefit of the University and the community,” he said, “and to speaking with a strong and united voice on business education.”

Paul is from Brisbane and did his undergraduate and postgraduate training in psychology at the University of Queensland (UQ). He began his academic career in the Department of Commerce at UQ, where he taught management subjects between 1974 and 1986. While teaching management, he was actively consulting with managers and organisations and developing research interests in team building and corporate culture.

“I’ve always been interested in looking at what new opportunities there are to expand and grow programs and schools - more from the point of view of increasing university access to people to undertake tertiary studies that are both challenging academically and relevant to job opportunities. It’s necessary to get the balance right between the two ends of the spectrum.”

It was during his time at Western Australia’s Curtin University in the late ‘80s that Paul realised the need to expand non-traditional areas of funding for Australian universities.

“I was appointed as foundation head of overseas programs for the Division of Business and was involved in the first phase of setting up Curtin’s offshore programs and recruiting international students. I learned the importance then of an international focus and of developing courses to attract fee-paying students, in order to build a business school that is able to deliver the sorts of programs it should.”

From Curtin, Paul went to Bond University on the Gold Coast from 1990-93, where as an Associate Professor in the Business School, he was responsible for the development of flexible MBA’s (Master of Business Administration) – intensive courses that took the MBA to managers with the material, places and times that suited them. The experience opened new horizons for Paul, who then set up a suite of successful programs for Griffith University on the Gold Coast. As Dean of the Faculty of Business and Hotel Management, from 1993-98, he tapped into a ready market in the small business and hospitality areas that saw more than half of the University’s student population enrolled in his school.

“We were able to expand the Faculty quite spectacularly, with its intake doubling every three years, and to establish a reputation for the University as a genuine alternative to Bond on the Gold Coast.”

Paul was attracted by the scope of activities an institution the size of Newcastle offers. Newcastle has strong faculties, is well positioned and has a reputation for innovation in teaching and research.

“The Graduate School is growing, with very good strategies in place and international exposure and commitments, and the undergraduate programs are in demand and attracting good students. The staff are performing well in terms of an appropriate blend of business skills and research.”

Paul says the message from the University’s restructure is the need in the business schools to collaborate across disciplines in new ways, and across schools in the University, to develop new programs that make the best of our key resource - our staff.

“I would like to see some programs developed that provide an exciting new approach to studying in the region,” he said, “and I’d like to extend what we are doing in the e-business area, in collaboration with the School of Information Technology. I have also entered into early discussions with Professor Steve Elliott at the Ourimbah campus about the possibility of developing a club and resort management program appropriate to the emerging tourism section in the Hunter.”

Paul is accompanied to Newcastle by his artist wife, Mona. Their three adult sons live in Brisbane.
Central Coast Commencement

A large proportion of the more than 750 students (including those in enabling programs) starting University studies at the Ourimbah Campus participated recently in the biggest Commencement Ceremony ever to be held there.

Held on Thursday, 21st February, the ceremony marked the academic starting point for the students, who represent the campus's largest commencing enrolment. They were welcomed by the Chancellor, Mr Ric Charlton, the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Roger Holmes, the Director of the Central Coast Campuses, Dr Barry McKnight and the Pro Vice-Chancellor for the Central Coast and the Faculty of Education and Arts, Professor Terry Lovat.

Dr Barry McKnight said this year's ceremony saw not only the largest enrolment of commencing students, but also a large contingent of academic staff and visitors from the community taking part.

Barry said degree programs offered by the University at the Ourimbah Campus have been in demand with this year's application rates significantly higher than in previous years. He also said that UAI cut-off scores were up from last year, some by two to three points, others by six or seven.

"The enrolment figures are extremely pleasing and reflect the quality and currency of academic programs offered," he said. "It is a very exciting time for students who are commencing University study. It's a challenge and also an adventure."

Some academic areas have had major increases this year, with a lot of interest in the generalist degrees such as Arts and the Social Sciences. There is also a trend toward an increased interest in Science.

"This augers well for the Ourimbah Campus as niche programs offered here have filled," Barry said. "These include the Bachelor of Human Nutrition and the newly introduced Bachelor of Herbal Therapies. The very popular Bachelor of Management has again attracted maximum enrolments."

Another major milestone for the Ourimbah Campus is the introduction of Engineering degree programs, enabling students to study the first year at Ourimbah and then complete the balance of their degree at the Callaghan campus.

"This is a real boost for Central Coast people who previously had to undertake Engineering programs away from the area," Barry said.

Commencing students were welcomed to the Campus by a representative of the Darkinjaan Aboriginal Land Council, Mr Phil Peterson and also by the President of the Student Union, Ms Loretta Burke.

Once the formal celebrations were completed, the students got down to lecture commitments in the week following, along with orientation tours of the Library, the IT Studies Centre, support services and the ubiquitous visit to the campus bookshop. They were helped along their way by a large group of student mentors, known as SOS (Students for other Students- a peer support system made up of current students who volunteer their time), whose task is to make sure that commencing students have someone to refer to in the first few months of University life.

A packed program of activities organised by the Student Union included lunchtime bands, free barbeques, Chinese acrobats, a martial arts demonstration, and the well-known hypnotist, Stephen Spellmaster. Along with market stalls, trivia competitions and signing up for sporting activities and clubs, it was a busy first week.

"The enrolment figures are extremely pleasing and reflect the quality and currency of academic programs offered."
Executive training delivered overseas

Newcastle Graduate School of Business Executive Programs are in demand internationally, with interest from organisations in Vietnam for further programs in 2002.

The international success of the NGSB Executive Programs began last year, with a visit to Vietnam to conduct management training for Vietnam Airlines in Hanoi.

Director of NGSB Executive Programs Phillip Morgan and Dr David Waller delivered a five-day intensive program in advertising and promotion to the airline's advertising department. Negotiations are underway for further training with the organisation and the visit has generated significant interest for other programs in Vietnam and neighbouring countries.

Phillip held discussions with banks, financial institutions and other organisations in the aviation industry while in Vietnam.

"The success of the Vietnam Airlines program is exciting and has created interest from a variety of other international sources," he said. "We hope to deliver a number of programs overseas this year."

Environmental Studies offer solution in Mozambique

Environmental Studies postgraduate student Rita Zacarias, from the African nation of Mozambique, says that practical solutions are needed to solve environmental problems.

"There is no point in experts telling companies they must not pollute if they can't show them how to stop the pollution," Rita says. "That is why I came to Newcastle to take up Environmental Studies, so I would have the background I need to be able to solve environmental problems."

Rita has extensive training and experience from around the world in environmental matters, but says the Newcastle course offered what she needed to actually make change.

Mozambique, with a population of 18 million, is considered a third world country. A Portuguese colony until 1975, it was then ravaged by a civil war that lasted until 1992. Much of the country's infrastructure was destroyed and thousand of land mines were laid, which remain a major problem.

Flooding in February 2000 devastated the landscape of Mozambique, shifting many of the land mines and killing hundreds of people.

Rita did a science degree in Maputo and taught chemistry in high school before working on a solid waste sorting project with a small community. To complete her diploma studies, she presented a paper on the effects of fibres from a paper mill on river water. She has also studied environmental leadership in South Africa, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia, China and Canada.

"When I go home I hope to concentrate on working to solve some of the many environmental problems," Rita said. "Flooding is a constant problem and the government is working to get agreements with surrounding countries to regulate water flow in the rivers to prevent flooding in Mozambique."

Rita was attracted to Newcastle after talking to others who had studied here. She will return to Mozambique in July but is hoping to come back to the University in the future to do PhD studies.
CONSERVATORIUM CELEBRATES 50 YEARS

The Newcastle Conservatorium was born as a community music school in a temporary hut placed in Civic Park in February of 1952. There were 11 students and 7 teachers.

Students who reached Diploma stage at that time had to go to the State Conservatorium in Sydney, which managed the Newcastle Conservatorium, for their last year of study. As things progressed they could study full time in Newcastle but had to sit for exams in Sydney. Later they could have their examinations in Newcastle but under the supervision of Sydney examiners.

"It was that way for many years," says Professor Robert Constable, Dean of Music at the Conservatorium, who was appointed Deputy Principal in 1984. "Finally, in 1990, the Con became part of the University of Newcastle with our own Bachelor of Music degree and we have never looked back."

The Conservatorium moved from the temporary hut to a home on the top floor of the War Memorial Cultural Centre in Laman Street, Cooks Hill in 1957 and then into the former People's Palace private hotel on the corner of Auckland and Gibson streets. In 1988 the site was expanded to include a performance complex.

"We now occupy several city buildings and we are continuing to expand to meet the demands of students," Robert said. "The Conservatorium has grown to be one of the biggest and best in Australia. We have outstanding graduates working in symphony orchestras around the country and overseas, and we have developed relationships with a number of overseas schools of music and drama including the Welsh College. These relationships allow an exchange of students and ideas."

The Conservatorium is a vital part of the cultural life of Newcastle. The University structure has brought the Drama Department into the Conservatorium this year and it is working closely with the Newcastle City Council to develop a vibrant cultural precinct in the city.

The Conservatorium's birthday celebrations included a concert, featuring staff and students, and showcasing the range of study undertaken, then the cutting of a huge birthday cake. The Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor, Members of Parliament, Hunter business leaders and former Conservatorium staff and students attended the celebration, which was held on February 22 in the Concert Hall.

THE HEARTBEAT OF THE CON

"Real emancipation only came in 1990 when the Conservatorium joined the University. It was then that the Con could really spread its wings and fly, unfettered by the parent body. The long (some would say, too long) gestation had certainly prepared the Conservatorium for its new responsibilities. New programs were commenced, new staff positions created, more students were available for recruitment into the growing number of academic programs.

Throughout the 90s, the Conservatorium also began to shift the balance of its activities into tertiary education and research. More University influences and opportunities were at work here. Notwithstanding this growth in professional and research areas, the Conservatorium has not lost touch with its roots. Its non-tertiary programs have grown and this year look like reaching 1500. This makes us, without a doubt, the largest Conservatorium in Australia. Our pre-tertiary students are mainly school age children, and some are in preparation for future entry into tertiary programs.

Our preparatory programs and our other community work are vital to the success of the Con and vital to the city. The State Government financially supports this work.

Even by national standards, this Conservatorium is not a very large school in all its parts. It is extremely complex, offering a range of courses from 'cradle to grave' approach to music education. The Conservatorium produces performers, composers and teachers of exceptional skill and musicianship; it educates and entertains the public; it offers in-service professional coursework programs; it has an off-shore program in Malaysia; it is affiliated with leading universities and music colleges throughout the world; and it offers "online" throughout the world.

The Conservatorium has always been proud of its academic standards. Even under the watchful eye of Sydney, there was always a local sense that Sydney misjudged the quality of what happened here. The academic and performance standards were equal to other similar programs anywhere. All that Newcastle really lacked was a critical mass of activity.
Throughout its life, the Con grew in strength, academic rigour, and in the number of friends it gathered around it. There was an inevitability about its progress, even when the progress seemed too slow.

If I had to nominate one single event, one single happening which has allowed the Conservatorium to flourish into maturity, I would not name a person, or a particular period, significant though any number of people or periods might have been. I think history will judge that the single most important occurrence was the creation of this concert hall.

Anyone who attempts to analyse and write a history of the Conservatorium in Newcastle will always return to this one central entity, its concert hall, as having provided the means of achieving substantial growth in every direction. All the Conservatorium had to do was learn to exploit it. Without this hall, students and staff would not have been inspired to try as hard as they do, without the hall, standards could not have risen as they undoubtedly have; without the hall there would be no Stuart Piano, certainly not in Newcastle and probably not anywhere else; without this hall, there would have been stifled growth in every domain; without this hall real partnerships, such as we have with Musica Viva, The Australian Youth Orchestra, Symphony Australia and the ABC, would not have been possible; without this hall there would be only limited opportunity for international partnerships; without this hall, we could not have contributed as much to the University and nor could the University have contributed as much to us.

The hall is the heartbeat of the Con and it is the envy of every other Conservatorium in Australia and most from overseas, for that matter.”

Excerpt from 50th anniversary speech by Professor Robert Constable
Teaching & learning

Rotary takes Newcastle lecturers abroad

Two lecturers from the School of Education have been given the opportunity to expand their international experience through the award of Rotary Foundation Grants for University Teachers.

The grants, offered through the international Rotary Foundation, enabled Deputy Head of the School, Dr Wendy Hawthorne to spend all of second semester last year at the National University of Samoa (NUS), and will allow her colleague Chris Weckert to travel to Thailand next year.

Wendy's connection with the NUS began in 1999, when she and other Newcastle academics visited the University following the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the two institutions.

"Between 1999 and my arrival in Apia in July 2001, I maintained contact with my colleagues in Samoa and forwarded teaching resources," Wendy, who teaches Early Childhood Education, said. "I was keen to undertake further work in Samoa and the Foundation Grant enabled me to do that."

Wendy taught three undergraduate programs in the NUS's Faculty of Education, as well as presenting a staff seminar on teacher professional development and workshops on the use of the Internet.

"I worked with members of the Faculty engaged in postgraduate study by distance and helped potential students with information about relevant programs in Australia," she said. "I was able to provide support and a different perspective for my colleagues and, in addition, was able to gain a greater appreciation of the challenges facing teacher educators in the Pacific. This will be particularly valuable as the University has a number of students from the Pacific and I have worked closely with international students here for a number of years."

Wendy says the Samoan visit has helped her teaching by causing her to question what she does and why, particularly in terms of family contexts and child development. While in Samoa, Wendy met with Newcastle alumni. She hopes to return to Apia for a conference later in the year.

Chris Weckert will be making her 14th trip to Thailand when she takes up her Rotary Grant in January 2003. She will teach in the Rajabhat Institute of Higher Education and the Changmai Welfare School, where she undertook her PhD research in 1996.

"The Welfare School is a sponsored boarding school for children of the hill tribes and teaches the equivalent of our K-12," Chris said. "The hill tribes are groups of refugees who have crossed the border into Thailand from Burma, Laos, China and Vietnam and settled in the mountains of northern Thailand. Eleven different tribes are represented at the school, none of which speak Thai, let alone English, which is a requirement for university entry."

During Chris' six-month teaching placement at the school in 1996, which was the first year that Year 12 students completed their studies, six students were successful in gaining entry to the prestigious Changmai University and eight got into Rajabhat Institute. Since that time, only one student has succeeded in gaining tertiary entry.

"There are a number of major stumbling blocks for these students but a big one is the need to pass an English exam to gain entry," Chris said. "Teaching English as a Second Language was the area of my research and I'm looking forward to returning to Changmai next year to put some programs in place to assist them."

Chris also plans to institute a mentoring system between Rajabhat Institute, with which the University has an agreement, and the hill tribes to help the students develop the confidence to believe they can succeed at university.

"What I learn at Chiangmai will feed into my teaching English to speakers of other languages at the University," she said. "I use a lot of anecdotes from my Thai experiences while I'm teaching, to illustrate the relationship between language and culture."

The Rotary Grant for University Teachers is made possible by the contributions of Rotarians worldwide. The purpose of the grants is to build international understanding while strengthening higher education in low-income countries. It aims to expand the horizons of students and professors.
$755,000 in new UNISS Scholarships

Sixteen students commencing studies in engineering this year at the University will share in $755,000 worth of scholarships under UNISS - the University of Newcastle Industry Scholarship Scheme.

The students are enrolled in nine different engineering programs, and come from Newcastle, the Hunter and throughout New South Wales.

UNISS, launched in 1998, provides participating students with 84 weeks of industry placement during a five-year period. Each scholarship is worth $45,000 over the life of the program. This year, electrical engineering scholar Anthony Laskovski has received an Energy Australia UNISS scholarship worth $80,000.

Thirty-six sponsors are now involved in the scheme, supporting 66 scholars, all at different stages of their degree programs.

Commencing UNISS scholars were welcomed by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for the Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment, Professor Adrian Page, at a function held at the University on February 22.

Tailor made course a first for graduate school

The University's online delivery company GraduateSchool.com will deliver a business program to managers of the Main Roads Department of Western Australia (MRWA) entirely online this year.

The innovative Foundations of Management Program was designed to serve the needs of MRWA managers from throughout Australia's largest state - from Kununurra, 43km from the Northern Territory border, to Albany 409km south of Perth, and east 595km to Kalgoorlie.

The program, comprising 12 study modules delivered over 36 weeks via the Internet, was developed in conjunction with the MRWA to serve the specific developmental needs of its managers.

Program Coordinator for MRWA, Michelle Coffey said the GraduateSchool.com proposal was attractive because of the flexibility they were able to provide in the choice of topic areas, their track record in e-learning delivery both in Australia and overseas, and the multi-mode way in which the program is delivered.

Thirty MRWA managers began the program, which includes print based material with supporting text, CD-ROM, and two complementary websites.

"The websites were the clincher for us," Michelle said. "WebLearn has exactly the content we specified and the course management platform called Blackboard provides the high level of interaction delivered throughout the state that we needed."

Professor Scott Holmes, Dean of the Graduate School, said he was delighted that the University is the preferred supplier in the MRWA partnership. "This is a solid achievement - our e-learning model clearly demonstrates that we are highly responsive to corporate needs, and that we can deliver specialised programs on time and within budget," Scott said. "We look forward to a productive and successful working relationship with MRWA."

"WebLearn has exactly the content we specified and the course management platform called Blackboard provides the high level of interaction delivered throughout the state that we needed."

Second year biotechnology student Adrienne Hanson, who has just completed her first year of industry placement with Gradipore, a provider of leading technology platforms to the life sciences. During her placement, Adrienne was involved in the preparation of a new Gradiflow machine designed to separate out individual proteins from various biological fluids.
The secret to successful supervision

Winner of the 2001 Newcastle University Postgraduate Student Association (NUPSA) Supervisor of the Year Award, A/Professor Edward Szczerbicki, says you can supervise almost anyone in postgraduate studies with success.

"The thing about supervision, whether it's for a final year student, a Master's or PhD, is that each case is unique," Ed explained. "Everyone who comes to my office has different qualities, which you need to discover so that you can direct and use them in the proper way, which means you can supervise almost anyone and succeed."

While he says winning the NUPSA award for doing the work he loves was wonderful, the secret of his success in this case was in finding a good quality PhD student in his nominator for the award, Dr Carl Reidsema.

The area in which Carl researched - intelligent systems and soft modelling - is an emerging 'hot' area in science that is greatly under-represented in Australian universities. This year, for the first time, it has been recognised as a priority area by the Australian Research Council. With only a handful of people here involved, Carl had to travel to Europe and the US to pursue it, as well as reading widely.

"He had to be tough to succeed in this research field," Ed said. "When he came to my office for the first time, I realised he had the very qualities needed for this research - qualities I had been seeking for some time. He had a solid background in engineering, as well as 10 years of experience as a project manager."

In his nomination of Ed for the NUPSA award, Carl says that he suffered from depression, divorce and countless other serious personal challenges during his studies, any one of which would normally have ended his dream to complete his doctorate.

"Ed was always there with positive, encouraging and empathetic words to help me try just a little bit more," Carl wrote in his submission. "Ed believed in me when I truly did not believe in myself and his enthusiasm was so contagious I could hardly fail to be motivated and get excited about the potential of my work."

Under Ed's guidance, Carl not only completed his thesis, he produced 12 publications along the way - four peer reviewed journal articles and eight conference papers, which he presented at international conferences in Australia, the UK, and the USA. Bibliography of his thesis consisted of 260 journal articles and the thesis was accepted without correction and with glowing praise from his reviewers. Carl is currently short-listed for interview out of hundreds of candidates for a prestigious lecturer's position with the University of New South Wales.

Ed was born in Poland and has held academic positions in Poland, Germany, Scotland and the USA. His MSc degree is in Naval Architecture, his PhD in Engineering, and his DSc degree is in Information Science. He is a world-class researcher in his field of Decision Theory and has published widely, including several books and close to 200 refereed articles and papers. Apart from one semester during which he was Visiting Professor at the University of California's Berkeley campus, he has been at the University since the end of 1994. Ed is currently the Assistant Dean responsible for Postgraduate Studies in the Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment. He has also developed and co-ordinates the Master of Engineering Management Program attracting students from Asia, Europe and, very recently, the US.

"As a supervisor, I don't do much, I just guide, point the way, and try not to impose too much on the student," he said. "When I see a young powerful mind heading in the right direction with their research, it's a wonderful thing. Being recognised by this award for my importance in helping Carl is something a supervisor dreams of."

Ed received the NUPSA award from Vice-Chancellor at a presentation dinner held at Bella Vista Function Centre in Mayfield in November last year.
Communicating enthusiasm online

Newcastle University Postgraduate Student Association (NUPSA) Teacher of the Year for 2001, Kirstie Carmick, says enthusiasm and involvement are the qualities that good teachers need to spark student interest.

The subject Kirstie is passionately interested in is human factors in aviation and although she taught or coordinated 11 courses at the University last year, it was for her work with distance students in the Master of Aviation Management that she won her award.

"I'm completely enthusiastic about human factors in aviation," she said. "It's a great advancing area with lots of research opportunities and the course attracts people from within military and civil aviation industries all around the world. I get a chance to have a positive influence to enhance the safety of the industry by advancing acceptance of human factors training."

Kirstie was born in England, lived in Singapore and emigrated to Australia when she was 10, doing most of her schooling in Wollongong. She won a BHP scholarship to study science at the Australian National University (ANU), where she did Honours and a Master's degree in psychology, specialising in human factors. On graduation, she worked as a psychologist with the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA).

Kirstie has been teaching part-time at the University since 1995 and began full-time at the beginning of last year. While she attributes her interest in aviation to the influence of her teachers and mentors at ANU, she says that enthusiasm is easier to communicate face-to-face.

"It's a bit more difficult to get across over the Internet, when everything is done in writing," she said. "It's a different way to teach - I try to talk on the phone with most of my students at least once and I check my email daily. I've also set up a 'coffee shop' in the Blackboard teaching environment, which acts as a bulletin board where I can interact with the students and they can chat with each other."

Kirstie says that although she begins her students' instruction, she grows in knowledge with them through the free interchange of ideas that typifies the course, which began in 2000.

"They are a great group to work with and come from such a variety of backgrounds," she said. "Many of them spend a lot of time surfing the net and finding relevant information and I sometimes have trouble keeping up with them!"

The student who nominated Kirstie for the teaching award lives in Canada. Addressing a range of criteria called for by NUPSA, he said Kirstie has an excellent command of her subject matter and goes to great lengths to help students to understand the material; and that she was accessible, approachable and responsive to student needs.

He said Kirstie uses a good mix of teaching instruments that allow her to gauge students' progress without burdening them unduly, with just the right number of evaluation and grading tasks that are very relevant to the coursework. She made expectations for students very clear right from the start, he said.

Students in the Master of Aviation Management come from many different backgrounds and include pilots, cabin crew, maintenance engineers, aviation managers, and air traffic controllers.

Kirstie says the human factors stream she teaches is important to all aspects of aviation. Her students come from Australia, Hong Kong, Canada, the Middle East, Africa, Malaysia, Singapore and other parts of South East Asia.

Despite the variety, Kirstie says it's surprising how many of her students know each other already, especially the RAAF people.

"There's a lot of friendliness amongst the students, particularly in certain areas," she said. "There is a lot of interchange between pilots and cabin crew to demystify what happens on the other side of the cabin door."

This sort of interaction is encouraged by the airlines and Kirstie offers a course called Crew Resource Management that teaches how the entire crew of an aircraft can work as an integrated team. She keeps up with what is happening in the aviation industry by reading industry journals and attending relevant conferences.

"I have been involved in the development of the Master of Aviation Management since it was first proposed by the Graduate School in 1999," she said. "It's been a lot of hard work to adapt to teaching online - I think my record was 14 emails from just one student over a weekend! The NUPSA award is wonderful recognition of the effort I've put in."

Kirstie received the Teacher of the Year Award from the Vice-Chancellor at a presentation dinner held at Bella Vista Function Centre on November 23.
Everyone deserves a chance

The University has developed an innovative program to train Indigenous workers in native bush regeneration.

Organised by the University's Indigenous Employment Coordinator in collaboration with Yamuloong Indigenous Training Centre and Yamteen, a Community Development Employment Program (CDEP), the Indigenous Trainees Program provides valuable training and on-the-job experience to Indigenous workers to equip them for jobs in a variety of areas.

Trainee Coordinator Mim Woodland, from the Facilities Management Group of University Services, says the scheme is a win-win proposition.

"They are learning heaps and we are getting badly needed help in the grounds," Mim said. "While we know we can't manage to employ all the trainees, we train them in bush regeneration, which will help to get them jobs with local councils or with the National Parks and Wildlife Service."

Yamuloong's Training and Employment section is committed to improving the training and employment outcomes for Aboriginal people. The partnership with the University through the Indigenous Trainees Program, which involves 20 trainees altogether, is one of Yamuloong's employment initiatives.

They also have partnerships with the Roads and Traffic Authority, Hunter Area Health and Australia Post.

"We are committed to equitable and quality outcomes for our people," Yamuloong Training and Employment coordinator Sean Gordon said. "The University program is an effective way of addressing Indigenous unemployment."

The trainees come from a variety of backgrounds to train at the University over 12 months for two days a week, or one day for those under 21 years of age. The scheme began last year, with three of the six trainees who undertook the program in 2001 now casually employed on the University's ground staff.

Rick Weekes, one of the trainees to gain work with the University, says he got sick of being unemployed after leaving Francis Greenway High School at Beresfield half way through Year 9.

"I love working outdoors with nature, so the job at the Uni is great," he said. "I've never worked with native plants before and I've enjoyed that."

Another worker to gain employment at the University through the trainee program, Torres Strait Islander Clay Niki says he hopes to work in national parks when he completes the bush regeneration course, which provides graduates with a certificate of completion.

"I'm interested in landscaping and horticulture so the job at the Uni has given me a lot of experience in different aspects of that," he said. "I'm a hands-on sort of person and there are a lot of different jobs to do around the campus."

The trainees learn a range of skills in caring for the University's 150 hectare bushland campus at Callaghan including paving, rock wall building, planting, laying gravel paths, mowing, mulching and whipper snipping. The second intake of 15 trainees began on February 18.

"I believe that everyone deserves a chance in life," Mim says. "It's a good learning curve for my workers, who learn tolerance and respect for other cultures."

"The University program is an effective way of addressing Indigenous unemployment."
An artistic development

A group of postgraduate Fine Art students has been helping to design features of a unique Lake Macquarie property development, Pambulong Forest.

The six artists, who work in a range of different media, have been consulting with developers on the creation of public and community art features to enhance the environment of Pambulong Forest.

More than 2500 homes may be established on the 110 hectare site, which is set in bushland between West Wallsend and Edgeworth. The art project arose from a conference in late 2000 between Pambulong representatives and Head of the School of Fine Art Professor Anne Graham.

Master of Fine Art student and project coordinator Caroline Hale said the group had produced a portfolio of designs for use at Pambulong that could be used for fencing, street lamps, signage, playground and park features.

"It was a bit confusing looking at the undeveloped site and trying to design for an urban setting, but the process was really good and the developers were most amenable to our suggestions," she said. "Some of the designs were fabulous and a few of them are going ahead."

Caroline has designed sculptures that can be used as dividers and fencing material.

Pambulong Forest project officer Roy Haggis says the design of the new suburb has evolved from a best practice study that examined a number of prize-winning schemes throughout Australia.

"Pambulong blends bushland into the urban environment by preserving a forest border around each residential precinct," he said. "Residential streets are designed as shareways with narrow road pavements favouring pedestrians over cars and vehicle speeds kept to 15kph in shareways."

Roy says the work done by the artists is being developed into a range of generic images to be incorporated into the landscape design. He said that the pavement art and bollard designs were of particular interest, providing subtle identification of pathways and public areas using images derived from local fauna and flora. The bollards double as lamps giving night time direction to key locations such as bus stops and pedestrian crossings.

"Art creates a distinctive character and identity in the locality while creating special places for enjoyment," he said. "It engenders pride in the residents and will assist in promoting community spirit."

Another Master's student on the art team, Jenny Brown, designed playground equipment as part of the project. She also praised the approach of the developer, Hammersmith Management Pty Ltd, for involving the artists early in the process rather than inviting them to create 'plonk art' to be fitted into a completed landscape.

"The project created a good link between the University study environment and the real world of professional art," Jenny said. "We have each received preliminary development fees of $1000 for the work we have done so far."

Jenny's playground design will be cast in concrete and replicated 10 times within the Pambulong Forest development and possibly elsewhere in Australia.

"The developers are a huge company with the benefit of national and international marketing at their disposal. We're keen to develop partnerships with them that are ongoing as you don't get many people interested in developing art on such a scale that are so well resourced."

Construction on Pambulong Forest will begin this year and proceed in stages over the next few years. The six artists—Katherine Sullivan, Braddon Snape, Joy Longworth, Jo Chisholm-Ray, Caroline and Jenny—began work on the project early last year.

Detail for a fence panel by Caroline Hale

Working together - back (l-r) postgraduate students Joy Longworth, Katherine Sullivan, Braddon Snape, Jenny Brown, Caroline Hale and landscape architect John Holland; front (l-r) Professor Anne Graham, Pambulong Forest Onsite Project Coordinator Mary-anne Florence and Project Director Roy Haggis
The case for an employment policy

Deputy Opposition Leader Jenny Macklin delivered the first in a series of public policy lectures being organised by the Centre of Full Employment and Equity (CofEE) at the University last month.

While in Newcastle, she also held discussions with CofEE about their research on the causes, persistence and costs of unemployment, met with ALP members, and attended a forum with local people experiencing long-term unemployment.

"I have certainly been exposed to a range of views and experiences but there has been one constant," Ms Macklin said. "All have made a compelling case for policy change."

In her lecture Ms Macklin presented the case for an employment policy.

"In January 2002, seven percent of the Australian labour force was unemployed. The picture becomes bleaker if we consider that hidden unemployment and underemployment are both substantial. CofEE has estimated that in 2000, 19 percent of our willing labour resources were in various states of underutilisation or underemployment.

"In Australian society the value of employment transcends the weekly pay cheque. Having a decent job is intimately connected to our sense of self, our engagement with society, our health, and the choices available to us... In the end, it is the social divisions that emerge in the absence of an effective employment policy that may impose the greatest costs of all."

Ms Macklin said she was confident that the current policy review being undertaken by the Labor Party will help the Opposition to develop answers, which will move Australia towards full employment, reduce inequality, and enhance the nation's collective wellbeing.

She thanked the researchers from CofEE for the contribution they have made to this process.

"It is a contribution that flows from both the calibre of your research and your willingness to engage in vigorous public debate," Ms Macklin told the lecture audience.

Director of CofEE, Professor Bill Mitchell, said the lecture was timely with recently released employment figures for regional areas showing that the Hunter region's unemployment rate has risen to 11.3 percent. The figures highlight the need for a revision of Federal Government thinking on labour market policy, he said.

"Since 2000 the region has lost 15 percent of its employment and nationally, the labour market continues to decline. Overall there are now 690,000 unemployed persons, who on average have been without work for more than 50 weeks."

The Government's main policy initiative in this area, the Job Network, is in tatters, with the Senate Estimates Committee finding that around 50 percent of the long term unemployed using assistance under the Job Network are recycled through it, Bill said.

"The unemployed can not search for jobs that aren't there," he said.

Health Fair checks staff fitness

NUSport will host a Health Fair for University staff on Tuesday April 9 to provide a fun, informative way of improving workplace health.

The Fair aims to promote health and wellbeing to staff and encourage healthy lifestyles, resulting in a healthier workplace.

You will be able to get a 'snapshot' of your health, as well as leaving the Fair with information and an action plan to improve your wellbeing.

With confidentiality assured, you can consult experts on everything from massage, back care, blood pressure, cholesterol checks, diet analysis, waist to hip ratio, and cooking.

Planned as an annual event, the Fair will be held at the Forum Sports and Aquatic Centre from 10am to 2.30pm and can be completed in approximately 30 minutes. Open to all University staff, the Health Fair is free. Watch out for details during March.
Sustainability students ‘bowled over’ by campus

The Facilities Management staff recently hosted a tour of the Callaghan campus by University of NSW Masters students from Europe, USA and Malaysia, who are researching applied sustainability. The students were particularly interested in the Barahinebean accommodation facility and the quality and depth of sustainability demonstrated in the case studies that they discovered. They said that the examples developed by University staff over the past 10 years are a strong attractor to potential students, commenting that the University provided an experience hard to find elsewhere. The visiting scholars thought that potential students in Europe and the USA would be ‘bowled over’ by the Callaghan campus. For information on environmentally sustainable aspects (or tours) of the campus please contact Latha Lewis on 4921 7328.

Maximum cool with minimum impact

A project to convert ventilation to full air conditioning has been occupying Facilities Management staff in design tendering and construction for the past 10 months. Over the summer break, construction began and the conversion work by contractors on the lecture theatres has been non-stop ever since to introduce the air conditioning i.e. cooling and natural gas fired heating. The nine lecture theatres involved seat up to 1100 students at full capacity and the design of the new system has been undertaken to provide comfort while limiting energy wastage.

Late delivery of some components saw the completion of the systems ‘down to the line’. However a valiant effort by all involved saw the systems operational in ventilation mode for the start of first semester and all systems were operating in cooling mode two days later.

The converted theatres are fed from main fan units in three separate plantrooms and a central heating/cooling plantroom. Each fan unit is fitted with three zones for individual temperature control and the zone is de-energised when unoccupied to reduce energy consumption. It is expected that the project will not substantially increase CO₂ emissions as the replacement of the previous electric duct-heating with natural gas fired heating, together with other energy conservation measures, should balance the additional electricity consumed by the water cooled chiller system.

The systems can now be monitored by Facilities Management via the online Building Management System to ensure continuing reliability and early rectification of faults. Energy consumption will also be monitored from the Energy Monitoring System for comparison with previous consumption levels.

While it was previously the practice to prop the doors of these lecture theatres open to improve ventilation rates, staff are now requested to keep doors closed to prevent loss of cooled or heated air to improve the energy efficiency of the systems (as well as keeping the mozzies out!).

Questions should be directed to David Alexander or Scott Mitchell on 4921 6500.

Electrical upgrade

The Callaghan campus in-ground electrical infrastructure is now 30 years old and approaching the end of its service life. It is well under capacity in some areas due to the construction of new buildings and an increase in equipment and plant in existing buildings.

The underground cables and substation switchgear will be upgraded in stages over the next few years to achieve sufficient capacity to carry the University through the next 20 years.

The initial stages, planned to begin this year, will see the design and installation of new cabling to under capacity areas, as well as reconfiguration of street feeders and an upgrade of power factor correction equipment.

The final stages, to be completed in 2004, will involve connecting all substations on campus as a single large ring main to allow dual feed paths and provide added security in case of cable faults. In order to complete these works, power interruption will be unavoidable.

Facilities Management will attempt to keep these interruptions to a minimum and stand-by generators will be provided to keep critical University functions online during these outages, as is normally the case. Enquiries should be directed to John O’Donohue on 4921 6500.
Welcome to 2002

The University Commencement Ceremony was held on Wednesday 20th February from 10am in the Great Hall, Callaghan campus.

The ceremony is the official start for the academic year. It began with the traditional Academic Procession followed by the National Anthem and then Mr Rex Morgan, representing the Awabakal community, welcomed the assembly to Awabakal land.

Deputy Chancellor, Professor Trevor Waring, and the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Roger Holmes, addressed the congregation. The Vice-Chancellor said that the University has this year outperformed every other university in NSW and the ACT in first preference applications, and demand is more competitive than ever before.

"This is a reflection of the excellent teaching and research programs at Newcastle, the biggest and most successful university in Australia, outside of the major capital cities," he said. "We're pretty excited about the level of interest in our programs in 2002."

The Vice-Chancellor told commencing students about the University's restructure and the background to the changes. He explained that Australian universities, in less than 20 years, have moved from a position where they were funded principally by government to a funding base that for most institutions includes little more than 50 percent of revenue from government. At the same time demands from government, both state and commonwealth, for accountability have increased, he said.

"You are now contributing from your own pockets a significant proportion of the cost of your university education," he said. "As students and consumers you expect value for money and we are determined to give you that value."

Ms Anna Starrett, Manager of Training and Development at Lawler Partners Pty Ltd, was guest speaker at the ceremony, delivering an address entitled 'I Look Ahead', the University's motto. Anna completed a Bachelor of Commerce degree at Newcastle and has decided to become a student again; she is studying Human Resources this year.

The Commencement Ceremony is held during Orientation Week, which ran from February 18-22, with class teaching beginning on February 25.