Sweet sounds of success
/pages 10 & 11
April 2000
Vice-Chancellor's Column

April edition

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A National Day of Action was held on the Callaghan Campus on 22 March 2000. The event was sponsored by the National Union of Students and coordinated locally by NUSA, and was very successful in highlighting the strong views of this group of students in seeking a return to fully publicly funded university education in Australia.

We are all aware of the ever-changing policies of federal governments on both sides of the political fence towards higher education. It was a conservative government under Menzies in the 1960’s that recognised university education as a national priority and provided operating grants directly to universities, even though nearly all of them at that time (and currently) were administered under State legislation. During the Whitlam ‘era’ in the early 1970’s, tuition fees paid by students were removed and the system operated under a ‘free’ (i.e. funded by the Australian taxpayers overall) higher education environment. This policy continued with bipartisan support for some time, although funding cuts along the way provided significant challenges for universities. In the late 1980’s, the Hawke government, during a period of major transformation of the Australian university system under Federal Education Minister John Dawkins, introduced a new system of user pays called HECS or the Higher Education Contribution Scheme. This was seen at the time as an innovative and equitable means of introducing ‘user pays’, providing for no ‘up front’ fees and with repayments being made by students or graduates when they could afford to pay, based on annual taxable income.

The introduction of higher and differential HECS fees by the Coalition Government in 1996, during a period of Federal Government expenditure reduction, has taken this modest 1989 scheme to a much higher level of fees for university students, such that they are now comparable to fees for a number of US State based universities. In addition, the ‘cutbacks’ to higher education funding at six percent spread over 1997-2000 have had a significant impact on available funds to support core activities in teaching, research and research training, and in service. I think that we are all aware that class and tuition fees via HECS with returns to the Federal Government now approaching a quarter of annual outlays, a decline in operating grant funding and major additional investment in research and development funding and in support for further research training and related scholarships.

Our students can clearly see an agenda of increasing tuition fees via HECS, with returns to the Federal Government now approaching a quarter of annual outlays, a decline in operating grant funding for Australian universities, and no additional funding for research and development through the ARC.

I think the students have a justifiable and supportable case and their arguments should be taken very seriously by all of us.
Outstanding graduates honoured

Two Newcastle graduates were honoured at the 2000 Convocation Annual Awards Dinner in March for their professional excellence and innovation and creativity in a chosen field.

Geoffrey Leonard, who was presented with the Newton-John Award, co-founded Hospitals of Australia Limited, now known as HealthCare of Australia, the largest private hospital and health care group in the Southern Hemisphere.

"Geoffrey Leonard is an outstanding contributor to the community, particularly in his achievements in the private hospital and health care area and in his contributions to the University as a Board member and Deputy Chair of the TUNRA Board, and Chairman of the Hunter Medical Research Board," Vice Chancellor Professor Roger Holmes said.

Also honoured was the winner of the Convocation Medal for Professional Excellence, Ian Harris, who serves as Clerk of the House of Representatives and has, since 1977, provided advice concerning parliamentary law and practice to the Government and the Opposition.

"Because of his experience and expertise, Mr Harris has been recognised internationally and has been called upon on numerous occasions to train members of parliament and parliamentary staff overseas," the Vice-Chancellor said.

Mr Harris is a leader in reforming the administration of the House of Representatives Department, focusing on increasing efficiency while encouraging work practices that recognise and build family values.

Also receiving recognition at the Convocation dinner will be six final year students selected for their outstanding performance and contributions during their final year of study. They were:

- Jane Bernard - Architecture, Building and Design
- Emma Travis - Arts and Social Science
- Tally Dewan - Economics and Commerce
- Chad Kentwell - Education
- Timothy Constable - Newton-John Memorial Music Prize
- Kathryn Butler - Newton-John Memorial German Prize.

Most satisfied graduates in Australia

The University's general engineering course has been rated the best of its kind for the third consecutive year in the latest survey from the Graduate Careers Council of Australia.

The national survey indicates that Newcastle graduates were the most satisfied of all Australian graduates in 10 areas: Architecture, Banking and Finance, Building, Chemical Engineering, General Engineering, Geography, Industrial Relations, Nutrition and Dietetics, Speech Pathology and Initial Teacher Education (Special Education).

The Vice-Chancellor commented that the overall standard of courses offered in Australia is very high.

"To achieve above the national average satisfaction rate in several courses, such as building and chemical engineering, is extremely pleasing," Professor Holmes said.

"The results underline the continuous improvement of courses delivered at the University, identifying specific areas where we can make further lifts in quality."

The good results are shared right across the University with 23 different fields of study registering improved ratings over the past three years.
Hunter Water sponsorship renewed

Hunter Water Corporation has signed a new five-year sponsorship agreement with the university as an ongoing collaboration in research and student training.

Hunter Water will sponsor the Chair of Environmental Engineering for a further five years, continuing an agreement struck in 1995. Professor Jetse Kalma currently holds the Chair.

Managing Director of Hunter Water, David Evans, says the partnership benefits both sides. "The university is home to world class researchers in a variety of fields," David said. "Hunter Water believes there is significant benefit to the company - and through it, the community - in being able to utilise this rich intellectual resource."

"At the same time, Hunter Water can provide a valuable industry perspective to complement the university's academic program, and become a partner in research," he said.

Professor Kalma says the agreement will further enhance the ability of the university to put real world problems and issues to environmental engineering students as part of their education. "This ensures they will have a better knowledge of what is affecting the water industry, and can tailor their studies to help address those issues."

In the first five years of the sponsorship, Jetse and his colleagues in environmental engineering have completed a range of research projects into water quality and quantity issues in the Williams River catchment, the major supply of drinking water to the Newcastle region.

They have just commenced a major three-year research project on how to sustainably manage the Tomago groundwater resource. This project is in collaboration with Hunter Water and the Department of Land and Water Conservation, and is supported by the Australian Research Council.

The Board of Hunter Water officially endorsed the Memorandum of Understanding on the Chair of Environmental Engineering agreement at its meeting on 23 March.

A real perspective on top level management

The Chief Executive Officers at three of the Hunter’s most successful organisations will tell business students and staff how successful CEOs develop philosophies, make decisions and succeed in their careers.

The seminars are part of "Management Thinking", organised by the Graduate School of Business. Paul Broad began the series with his address on March 15, while Katherine McGrath and Nigel Whitehead will address seminars in April and May.

Professor Scott Holmes, Head of the Graduate School of Business, says the seminars are a chance for students and staff of the School to gain a real understanding of a senior management position.

"The speakers will discuss the key factors in their personal success, and the qualities they look for in colleagues and associates across the business community," Scott said. "Their experience in strategic decision making and high level management means they are able to predict leaders and managers of the future. This sort of advice and knowledge is invaluable to current business students, and anyone looking to achieve a high-level position in any company," he concluded.

The seminars will present three speakers during each semester of the university’s academic year.

12 April: Katherine McGrath
10 May: Nigel Whitehead

AIDS project a worldwide first

A Newcastle sociologist has put together the first documentary tracing the AIDS epidemic in a day-by-day format from 1952, when HIV immunodeficiency was first reported in medical literature. "Porous Corporealities and Public Hygienics: Normalcies, Politics and Sexualities in the Age of AIDS" by Dr Raymond Donovan, draws on extensive historical, medical, sociological, legislative, and media sources from Australia, Britain, and the United States to record events related to AIDS.

"This is more than a mere listing of events or apparently isolated episodes," Raymond said. "It is a documentary chronology which consists of several thousand detailed entries, organised day-by-day, week-by-week, year-by-year, covering the sequential unfolding of events and reactions to the AIDS epidemic."

Raymond lectures in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology.
An independent judiciary is the ultimate guarantee of a free society, former Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia, Sir Gerard Brennan told a Newcastle audience last month.

Delivering the 2000 Sir Ninian Stephen Lecture, Sir Gerard said: "To ensure that effect is given to the values of the common law when they stand in the way of an exercise of power, especially the power of governments, a judiciary of unquestioned independence is essential.

"The judge stands in the lonely no-man's-land between the government and the governed, between the wealthy and the poor, the strong and the weak. She or he can identify with neither, for partisanship robs the judge of the authority to discharge the judicial office."

The freedom of society requires the 'great repositories of public power' – the legislature, the executive, the judiciary and the media – to exercise their powers according to principle and be independent of influences that might divert them from their duty, Sir Gerard said. He called on more public debate on the question of whether an entrenchment of human rights (through the enactment of an Australian Bill of Rights) with its transfer of power to the judiciary is expedient to protect the rights of minorities.

"But as the ultimate guarantor of freedom is our sensitivity to the dignity and autonomy of others...and our vigilance in insisting on the patent adherence to principle by the great repositories of public power, the future of a free society is in our hands," he concluded.

Sir Gerard was admitted to the Queensland Bar in 1951. Among the many notable cases in which he has appeared was the Woodward Royal Commission into Aboriginal Land Rights and he has acted as Senior Counsel for the Northern Land Council. One of the foundation judges of the Federal Court of Australia in 1977, Sir Gerard was appointed to the High Court in 1981 and sworn in as Chief Justice in April, 1995.

The Sir Ninian Stephen Lecture, an annual public lecture by an eminent lawyer, was commenced in 1993 to mark the commencement of the Bachelor of Laws course at the University. Lecturers have included Sir Ninian Stephen, Justice Deidre O'Connor, Justice Michael McHugh and the Honourable Gordon Samuels.

Sir Gerard delivered his lecture, Principle and Independence: the Guardians of Freedom, in the Conservatorium Concert Hall on March 24. While in Newcastle, he also inspected the university's Newcastle Legal Centre and met with staff and students.

A spectacular show without the visuals

Physics lecturer A/Professor John O'Connor's imagination and creativity were tested last month when he was asked to present his spectacular science show at the State Camp for the Visually Impaired at Narrabeen.

The show, which is part of the SMART scheme (Science, Maths and Real Technology) to promote science in schools, usually relies heavily on sight for its best effects. After consulting with his colleagues John put together four 90-minute shows dealing with weather, sound and sport.

"I think the organisers thought I had lost the plot when I asked for cricket bats and balls and skipping ropes before the event," John said.

"They were greatly relieved to find that these props were not used in their normal fashion."

The shows consisted of brief presentations and explanations followed by hands-on activities. They followed the theme of the camp, which is to bring the students together in an environment where they are the norm. Each session of the show catered for around 30 students with some 10 percent of them totally blind while the remainder suffered varying degrees of impairment.

"While it was a challenge to develop hands-on activities that did not rely on sight," John said, "the joy and appreciation of the students made it worthwhile."

John delivered his shows at the Camp, which is held at the Academy of Sport at Narrabeen, on March 16.
A healthy sense of injustice

From the time Glynis Wattus left Newcastle Girls High School in the early 1960s and sought work as an industrial chemist, she developed a 'healthy sense of injustice'. Turning down an opportunity to work in her family's refractory business, the young Glynis was determined to get work on her own merits.

"I believed strongly in merit-based recruitment well before the introduction of the Anti-Discrimination Act in 1977," she said. "I eventually got a job - I thought through my own efforts - only to discover later that my mother had contacted the technical manager of the company and pleaded with him to employ me!"

While the young science enthusiast did her Chemistry Certificate part-time at technical college while working, and later went on to complete a Bachelor of Science and Honours at the University, she was destined to pursue her 'sense of injustice' professionally. Glynis began work as the Manager of the University's newly established Equity and Diversity Unit in January. The new unit coordinates both staff and student equity issues in one area, amalgamating the functions of the former Fair Work Practices Unit of Human Resources Management (HRM) and the Student Equity area.

"I report to the University Secretary and Registrar," Glynis said, "and the new unit will seek to improve outcomes in the university's equity agendas by influencing changes to policies and practices. It isn't enough just to reach people's hearts and minds."

Glynis comes well qualified for the challenge of improving the university's equity outcomes. She returns to Newcastle from almost 10 years in a similar position at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) which included a couple of years during which she was seconded to the University of Western Sydney as Director of EEO and Affirmative Action. Glynis feels confident that her hard work at UTS resulted in senior management allowing input from the equity and diversity unit to every level of university governance.

"My greatest challenge at Newcastle will be to get recognition and acceptance that equity should be part and parcel of management of every area of the university on a day to day basis. I'd like to see it integrated into all the mainstream functions and the university has a way to go in recognising equity issues and effectively integrating them."

Glynis plans to work with faculties and divisions to help them identify local equity priorities that best suit their needs and working environments.

"Priorities differ in different areas," she explained.

While there is legislation at both State and Federal level determining equity for staff in four areas - women, people with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and those with English as a second language - student equity target areas are not set by legislation but by government funding of six equity areas. These are:

- women in non-traditional areas of study and in higher degrees
- people from a non-English speaking background
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- people with a disability
- those from a low socio-economic status backgrounds
- people from a rural or isolated area.

Newcastle has a large percentage of students from a low socio-economic background and a significant number from rural and isolated areas. But it is in the area of women studying in non-traditional areas at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels that Glynis thinks Newcastle has real issues.

"The situation is chicken and egg. Until we have an established cohort of female staff members in these areas, we will struggle to attract and retain female students." However, she sees the work of the Vice-Chancellor's Equity and Development Committee as a positive factor in this area. The committee established a working party that has produced a report outlining strategies to change current staff and student profiles. She is also excited about the appointment of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor as the Director of Affirmative Action for the University.

Glynis' career has been full of firsts and breakthroughs. When she was appointed as a Staff Supervisor in the laboratories of the Hunter Water Board in 1982, only seven percent of the staff were women and Glynis was the most senior. She became the first woman to be elected to the union's committee of management.

It was while she was at the HWB that she decided to move into the equal employment opportunity area and commenced a Master of Business Administration course majoring in Human Resources at the university. By the time she left her EEO position in 1990, the HWB had doubled the proportion of women on the staff, including a number in very senior positions and 50 percent of their apprentice intake was female. They also had a significant proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and staff members with a disability.

Her first task at the university will be to raise awareness about the new Equity and Diversity Unit and to target individual equity challenges for different areas of the institution. She is happy to be back in her home town and eagerly anticipating her new professional challenge in the field that she loves.

"I came into the area because I'm passionate about it."
Long service rewarded

Seventeen members of staff from the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, whose combined years of service to the university exceed 400, were rewarded for their efforts with the presentation of awards for general staff excellence last month.

Dean, Professor Rob Sanson-Fisher, said the awards marked the enormous contribution that general staff make to the faculty and will be presented on an annual basis to outstanding members of staff.

"It is often said that stress in the workplace is due to a feeling that you have no control over what you are doing, and I think that the general staff in the faculty must have suffered enormous amounts of stress," Rob said. "These awards in some small way recognise the contribution under difficulty conditions."

Among the seventeen who received awards, one of the longest serving staff members, Linda Rogers, was originally hired to run the university's histology facility and now works in the Discipline of Anatomy, Head of Anatomy, Dr Robert Callister, said that Linda had received numerous accolades from students and staff over the years for her terrific service. He praised her flexibility, as did many of the supervisors who presented the awards to staff from their area.

"We have all had to do a lot of things over the years that we were not hired to do," Robert said. "Linda has attacked the new technology of the Internet and now does all our development on the web."

The award winners, who received a distinctive glass trophy each, were: rear (from left) Pam Glenfield, Paula Jarvie, Phillip Nix, Linda Rogers, Sue Graf, Joan Worboys, Therese Alder, Jan Chapman, Jeff Davis. Seated: Lindy Barkman, Marie Dick, Jan Austin, Diane Neshit.

Front: Peter Dosen, John Buxton and Trevor White.

Kathleen Byrne was away on leave.

Soccer club kicks goal

The University of Newcastle Soccer Club has undergone an amazing transformation that has seen it progress through five divisions in seven years to play in the region's premier division, and grow to be one of the largest senior clubs in northern New South Wales.

The secret to the club's success, which has seen its membership swell from 30 to around 130, has been organisation, according to President of two years, Michael Kmet.

"The club became better organised and started to actively recruit players during Orientation Week and other occasions," Michael said. "As we began to recruit more players, we began to go up through the divisions and that attracted players who in the past would have played for other clubs while they were at uni."

To qualify for the 2HD State League competition, the northern New South Wales second division, the club had to satisfy a range of criteria including proving that it had a sound management and financial base, as well as a commitment to junior development.

While the club had previously not involved itself with juniors, it has affiliated with a non-profit organisation, Excel Soccer Incorporated, that runs camps and clinics for juniors with the aim of developing the sports stars of the future. Excel is a local group run by former Newcastle National Soccer League coach, Jim Foley.

Another element in the club's recent success has been the recruitment of international students.

"We have benefited from the university's Scandinavian connections by recruiting players from this strong footballing area," Michael said. "We also have Africans, Pacific Islanders and students from Asian countries playing for us. The breadth of this mix makes the football fun and enjoyable for the players."

The club, which is currently sharing No. 1 Oval with the rugby club, is looking forward to moving into new headquarters at the Ray Watt Pavilion when the building work is completed in May. "The Sports Union has made a big investment in the improvements to the oval and the new pavilion and we're very much looking forward to using the new facilities," Michael said.

The Soccer Club caters for all levels of players, fielding teams in the less competitive divisions and the over-35's competition. The university also has a women's soccer club, which has three teams.
Newcastle students were given a chance to find out about some of the many institutions around the world with which the University has exchange agreements at the Semester Overseas (SOS) Fair held in the Shortland Union last month.

Exchange students from America, Scandinavia, the UK and Asia were on hand to talk about their experiences of studying abroad and representatives from several overseas universities manned stalls offering details of their universities and their countries.

Introducing the fair to students in the Brennan Room, Pro Vice-Chancellor Professor Jenny Graham said that internationalisation was an important part of the University, particularly in the last 10 years.

"We work and live in a global community and in order for our graduates to have relevance and access to jobs in the future, it's important that we internationalise all aspects of our university's activities."

Students who took part in the exchange program brought back worlds of experience they are unable to get here, with the living experience of studying abroad just as important as the academic aspect, Jenny said.

The universities who were represented at the inaugural Exchange Fair included the University of Oulu in Finland, Lund University in Sweden, Oslo University in Norway, the University of Paderborn in Germany and Clemson University, Northern Arizona University, Colorado School of Mines, the University of Iowa, Iowa State and Northern Iowa in the United States.

The three Iowa university representatives were in Australia for a week, raising awareness of their exchange program amongst Australian students at various universities. Newcasle has had an exchange agreement with Iowa's three largest universities since 1997. More than 45 students from Iowa are currently studying in Newcastle but fewer of our students have taken up the chance to study there.

University of Iowa representative Hannah Covert said that Australian students often worried about the cost of studying abroad and were unaware of scholarships available to help financially.

"An increasing number of employers are looking for international experience so study abroad is a great resume booster," Hannah said. "Newcasle has a wide range of faculties and students would find it easy to find the same courses at our universities. They pay the same for our courses as they would for one here."

Computer Science student, Daniel Falk, who was representing his home institution the University of Lund at the Fair, said that his decision to come here for a 12 month exchange was influenced by a number of factors.

"Australia has a great climate and I read about 10 universities here. Newcasle is a quality university with subjects that match well and courses of the same high standard as at home," he said. "It is also close to Sydney."

Daniel, who is living at Evatt House, plans to work on his English and to enjoy experiencing another culture during his stay.

The Semester Overseas Fair, held on March 8, also launched the new website which includes an electronic library of exchange opportunities.

For details on SOS email studentexchange@newcastle.edu.au or visit the website at www.newcastle.edu.au/sos.

Semester Overseas (SOS) is the new name for the university's student exchange program. The program has been running since 1995 and since that time 149 students from Newcastle have participated. The SOS program offers students the opportunity to spend one or two semesters studying overseas as part of their degree. Students can also apply for scholarships to assist with the cost of airfares.

Research links solar activity to flooding

A Faculty of Engineering researcher is developing a new approach to assessing climate variability and the risk of flooding across Australia, with statistics in New South Wales showing the current flood risk may be three times higher than in the first half of the century.

Dr Stewart Franks from the Department of Civil, Surveying and Environmental Engineering has questioned current ways of determining flood risk, saying they don't adequately take into account the behaviour of the naturally changing climate.

"Greenhouse gas emissions are often named as the sole cause of change in global temperatures and climate," explained Stewart. "Yet recent research shows natural solar variability may also be responsible for as much as half of the global warming and most of the climate variability seen in the 20th century."

The behaviour of the sun is not fully understood according to Stewart and may be largely unpredictable. If solar activity reduces, we may actually see global cooling over the next 50 years, he said. The future of Australia's climate is therefore uncertain.

But Stewart says the greenhouse effect cannot be disregarded.

"It has contributed to at least half of global warming, and so CO2 emissions must continue to be reduced. However, because the climate is unpredictable, we must focus our efforts on understanding how changing climates impact on human activities," he said.

"If we can understand climate impacts better, we can develop adequate strategies to cope with both natural and unnatural changes in the climate."
Maths students get head start

Year 12 students from across Newcastle are starting their university studies early, with an innovative program established by the university and the Department of Education and Training.

Sixteen students from five high schools are studying the advanced mathematics course MATH 121, and will receive credit for the subject once they enrol in any one of a range of courses that utilise mathematics at the university. Students who do well will be offered the chance to enrol in second year mathematics units during their first year of study.

This is the first semester of the program, being conducted by Professor Iain Raeburn, and class numbers have increased since the start of the academic year.

Associate Professor Brailey Sims, Head of the School of Mathematics and Physical Sciences, says the program further establishes important links between high school and tertiary study.

"This gives students a look at university life and allows them to gain an understanding of studying maths at a tertiary level," said Brailey.

Education Department District Superintendent Laurie Tabart says he appreciates the work of school principals to establish the initiative.

"It is also encouraging to see parents and students supporting the program, and I recognise the contribution of maths teachers and head teachers in establishing this link with the university," he said.

The five high schools involved are Whitebridge, Merewether, Waratah, Newcastle Grammar and Kotara. Classes are conducted at the university every Tuesday from 4.30pm - 7.30pm.

ACOSS head calls for welfare reform

New research by the Australian Council of Social Service has found that hundreds of thousands of disadvantaged Australians are being heavily fined for infringing complex social security rules, President Michael Raper revealed at a public lecture at the university last month.

"The number of people being fined may reach over 220,000 in this financial year, if the figures for the first four months continue," Michael Raper said. "This is an 85 percent increase since 1997-8."

"These people are already struggling to survive on the basic payment rate of $163 a week and yet they are receiving fines ranging from $339 to $1,304, even though their 'offences' are often trivial, understandable or unintentional."

The fines imposed were not for welfare fraud but for infringements of increasingly complex and onerous social security requirements, Michael said.

Indigenous Australians, young people, those with low literacy skills or high mobility (including homeless people) are disproportionately affected by the penalties, according to the ACOSS report.

"These people are already amongst the most vulnerable in our community," Michael said.

"Reducing or withdrawing their income support only makes them more vulnerable and less able to meet their 'obligations'."

"The ACOSS head called for a new approach to welfare at a time when the Howard government is examining welfare reform."

"If the government is serious about improving the welfare of all Australians – including sole parents, people with disabilities and those without a job – it needs to adopt a new approach," he said.

Michael's lecture, entitled Welfare Reform – Unpacking the Prejudice: Politics versus Policy, was delivered in the General Purpose Building on March 23.

Students from Social Work and Social Science took part in a follow-up discussion with Michael on the issues raised in his lecture. In addition to his public lecture, Michael ran a very successful workshop with final year social work students on "developing and influencing effective policy."

Michael Raper was at the university at the invitation of the Department of Social Work. A part-time member of the Department's teaching staff, Chris Dodds, is also an executive member of ACOSS.
Shakespeare as we like it

The Department of Drama presented As You Like It, one of Shakespeare’s most exuberant comedies, as its first production of 2000.

Directed by Professor Victor Emeljanow, the production was given a contemporary setting and featured some of the Hunter’s best known actors.

"The production offered something for everyone to enjoy, especially young audiences," Victor said. "A distinctive feature was the live music provided by Rupert Jenner, Luke Paramor and other well-known recording artists and members of the Newcastle-based bands Little Hornet, Chicaine and Truffles."

As You Like It featured Carl Caulfield as Touchstone and Barry O’Connor as Jacques, Beth Aubrey as Rosalind and Michael Meadley as Orlando.

“In addition, there was a large cast made up of performers familiar to audiences from the Department’s recent outstanding productions including Glen Hone, Ben Turner, Shaun Perrett, Sharon Davis, Ben Arnot, Daniel Smith, Owen Elliott, and Lauren Cruickshank,” Victor said.

The season ran for two weeks from 7 March in the University’s Drama Theatre.
What does Mardi Gras mean to regional NSW?

While the economic benefits of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras are still being counted – the event reaps close to $100 million annually – the cultural significance of the event is yet to be fully realised.

Dr Kevin Markwell from the Department of Leisure and Tourism Studies hopes a study of the other aspects of the Mardi Gras will highlight the event’s greater importance, particularly to people living outside Sydney.

“The cultural and social aspects of Mardi Gras have been widely discussed, but there has been little informed research to support such discussion,” Kevin explained.

Through surveys and focus groups, Kevin will study the significance of Mardi Gras to Newcastle and Hunter residents.

“I am particularly interested in gaining a better understanding of the contribution of Mardi Gras to the construction of contemporary gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender identities, communities and cultures,” he said.

Overseas research shows that festivals and special events such as the Mardi Gras and the International Gay Games, to be staged in Sydney in 2002, broaden the community’s understanding and acceptance of marginalised groups such as gays and lesbians.

Kevin hopes his Australian research will provide further evidence of the far-reaching impact of Mardi Gras on such understanding and acceptance.
On-campus parking can be a difficult and controversial issue but some relief is in sight with the number of available car spaces to be supplemented by a $5 million multi-level car park.

The multi-level structure will be built on No.1 car park (near the Great Hall) and is currently in the preliminary planning stages. Providing approvals are received, construction is expected to commence in November.

However, the answer to the University's parking problems is not simply to increase the supply of parking spaces. While the proposed parking facility will provide some element of relief from parking frustration, it is not a panacea.

The inescapable fact is that parking demand needs to be managed or it will exceed the practical carrying capacity of the Callaghan campus. Clearly a more comprehensive approach is needed, including initiatives to make other means of travel more convenient and attractive to the University community.

Because of the variety of opinions on the subject, the comprehensive approach is needed, including initiatives to make other means of travel more convenient and attractive to the University community.

Multi Level Carpark
CONCEPT SKETCH

provision of campus car parking spaces is a significant transport management issue. The objective of the university's strategic plan "to pursue policies related to sustainability and efficient site management" is not appreciated by those who cannot find a parking space where and when they want one.

The Physical Planning and Estates Branch has been closely involved in the implementation of strategies to enhance alternative modes of transport other than private motor vehicles. To date the University has invested some $2.85 million in infrastructure supporting public transport and cycleway improvements on campus - with considerable improvement achieved over the 1990s. Improvements made so far have been:

- increasing supply of on-campus residential accommodation with provisions for single- or dual-occupancy and motel-style accommodation;
- providing designated bike routes within the campus including involvement with regional organisations to improve bike routes to and from the University;
- providing extra bike racks at central locations on campus;
- developing permanent pedestrian access between the railway station at Warabrook, and University buildings. In addition, an access road and lighted pedestrian path were constructed, and a Security Shuttle Bus service was introduced for the late afternoon/evening period;
- establishing bus shelters with emergency telephone facilities and public bus routes within the campus;
- improving street lighting for increased security and driver visibility; and
- implementing other initiatives such as improved street signage, line markings, site locality guide maps and traffic calming measures.

The results from the March 1999 transport survey highlight some very positive emerging trends in comparison with the 1995 studies. They are:

- peak demand for parking spaces is 21 percent lower;
- usage of public transport had increased by 63 percent over levels before the opening of the Warabrook Railway Station;
- a dramatic increase in the number of pedestrians and cyclists - approximately 140 percent for each mode.

These improvements are even more marked when compared with the situation which confronted the Callaghan campus during 1990. Then, traffic congestion frequently caused delays of 40 minutes and longer, with lines of vehicles stretching beyond Stockland Mall. At that time the indiscriminate parking of "feral" cars was also causing significant damage to the University's landscape and conflicts often occurred between drivers when cars were "parked in" by inconsiderate parkers.

Transport to and from university campuses and the provision of on-site parking are difficult issues for every urban-based university in Australia, and Newcastle is no exception. However, there have been positive trends over previous years and these are continuing.

An area where potential gains are yet to be realised is through efficient scheduling of lectures and tutorials to evenly distribute demand through the week. At present, timetables are stacked at the beginning of the week, creating an artificial peak demand for private parking facilities on campus. The crucial point will be to convince key stakeholders, including academics and students, to increase the use of campus facilities on Thursdays and Fridays. This will significantly reduce peak demands and the provision of inflated infrastructure.

For more information on this topic please contact Philip Pollard from Physical Planning and Estates on ext 6500.
**Spotlight on the Deans**

**Professor John Ramsland**  
**Faculty of Arts and Social Science**

**Background**

I was born in 1942 at Manly, so I was both a child of the streets and a boy from the beach (rather than the bush) – a working class lad in the midst of a rather leisurely middle class culture.

I have always had a fascination for history and literature and spent most of my spare time reading in my childhood and adolescence. I attended Manly Boys’ High School and immediately after completing the Leaving Certificate, went to Bathurst Teachers’ College, where I first met my future (and present) wife who was also a student from Sydney. We have two adult sons, both happily married, and one grandson called Harry.

At the age of 19, however, I found myself teaching five small secondary school classes at the same time in the one classroom in the government Central School of Yeoval, a small bush town in the sheep and wheat country of the Central Western District of NSW. Simultaneous multi-levelled teaching in English, social studies, history, biology, geography, art and other subjects was one way to learn very rapidly the craft, skills and mystery of teaching. Indeed, it was an education in itself.

I taught for 10 years in state high schools, rising eventually to the rank of subject master in English/History – at the time the youngest subject master appointed in NSW. While teaching, I completed a Bachelor of Arts through New England University by external studies and a Master of Education through the University of Sydney by evening studies.

I was then appointed to Lismore Teaching College and later, Goulburn Teachers College, where I was a Lecturer in Education, specialising in history and sociology. I was appointed to the University of Newcastle in 1978. By that time I had completed a Master of Arts (Honours) and in the next three years, finished a PhD while a full-time staff member. I became a member of the history department in 1991 after being in the Department of Education of the University for several years. In January 1998 I was promoted to the vacant Chair of History.

I was first elected Dean of the Faculty of Arts in February 1991 while I was foundation Director of the School of Humanities and Social Science appointed in 1989. Before that I was Dean of the former Faculty of Education, elected on two occasions. When the Faculty of Arts was amalgamated with the Faculty of Social Science and Department of Communication and Media Arts, I was appointed foundation Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Science, a position I have held ever since, being reappointed on three occasions. I am now, apparently, the longest serving Dean of Arts and Social Science in the country (but hopefully not the oldest!).

**Strengths**

The faculty aims for excellence in a combination of teaching and research. The latest exit surveys have placed the faculty fourth in Australia in terms of student satisfaction, ahead of the “sandstone” universities. European languages in the Department of Modern Languages was ranked second in the country in the quality of its teaching and all our subjects ranked highly.

We have also done well in terms of research output. We have about 130 members of academic staff and they produce around 130 publications each year – books, papers and articles. The history department at present produces the most research quantum in the faculty per person.

**Challenges**

We’d like to boost enrolment in postgraduate coursework in the faculty. We have a good mixture of professional and general degrees and are able to offer quality programs to industry and the community in Social Work, Speech Pathology, Leisure and Tourism, Fine Arts, and Communication and Media Arts.

Another important priority is to develop areas of research that benefit the local community. We are also trying to build our international links with discussions about cooperative projects currently underway in Indonesia and Samoa.

**Work**

My books include _Children of the Backlanes_ (1986), _The Struggle against Isolation_ (1987), and _With Just but Relentless Discipline_ (1996). Another on the history of Manly, _A Place Apart_, is at present being published in Adelaide. I have also recently been commissioned to write a history of Aboriginal-European relationships in the Manning Valley. Since beginning at the University, I have written over 80 historical articles and essays. I like to keep going in historical research and move from topic to topic as the interest moves me.

I like the concept of structured democratic leadership and have an excellent Deputy Dean and group of Assistant Deans, who have all had the opportunity to take on various leadership roles within the faculty. While I play the overall leadership role, I have people who specialise in various leadership work. I also have very able and experienced heads of departments, who ensure excellence at the subject level.

**Leisure**

I still enjoy reading good books and watching good movies and plays as well as walking around the suburb where I now live admiring everyone else’s gardens. I also like to swim and watch rugby games (good ones). I don’t collect stamps (any more). I like oysters.

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Shaving for a cure

The bald and the beautiful - Research Branch staff Chris McDonnell (left) and Rod Lewis get the treatment from Lou and Rebecca of Sherlock's Hair Studio in Merewether.

Around 40 university staff members sacrificed their hair in the name of medical research last month when they took part in the Leukaemia Foundation's World's Greatest Shave for a Cure appeal.

Robert Nicol, from IESD's Information Systems Program, is recovering after a bone marrow transplant two years ago to treat chronic myeloid leukaemia. His email to colleagues asking if anyone would like to sponsor him to shave his head sparked more than 25 of his co-workers to join him in shedding their locks.

Rob is on a steering committee to establish a Newcastle Leukaemia Foundation support group. He says the Foundation provides services including:

- patient and family support
- education to patients, the general public and employers
- advice
- financial support.

"We'd like to try and raise funds to provide some accommodation for the families of patients in the Mater Hospital," Rob said. After spending three months in Sydney when he had his bone marrow operation, he understands the need for this type of facility.

The University's Security Services are also light on hair after more than a dozen of their number took part in the World's Greatest Shave. Security officer Kile Nicholas said not everyone had their heads shaved, with some staff members having "number two's" and some having their beards cut off by staff at the Cutting Crew hairdressers.

"My uncle died of cancer and when I saw the advertisement for the Greatest Shave on TV, I spoke to some of the guys at work and we decided to take part," Kile said.

IESD's group raised more than $3,000 and the Security Services group $2,000 in personal donations from the same donor pool. Rob and Kile would like to thank staff and students for their generosity.

The national appeal, in its second year, aimed to raise $5 million this year, with funds going towards research to find a cure for leukaemia and other haematological diseases including lymphoma and myeloma.

Goods and Services Tax (GST)

The GST is predicted to have a far greater impact on the operation of businesses in Australia and will require a greater financial outlay than Y2K compliance projects.

The university sector is likely to experience greater concerns with the GST than the private sector due to the size of the respective organisations, the complexity of services offered and our overall historical lack of exposure to transactional taxes (eg sales tax). The GST will have a substantial and wide ranging impact in many aspects of the university's operations including:

- teaching not directly relating to an award (i.e. subjects for which credit cannot be obtained towards a university award);
- research and consulting activities;
- financial management arrangements;
- cash flows;
- residential accommodation;
- all major contracts; and
- pricing policies.

Presentations have been made to wide audiences across the university and it is intended to hold faculty/division specific training sessions during May/June to ensure that there is an appropriate understanding of GST requirements prior to the implementation date of I July 2000. Training in Finance One for GST will also be held prior to this date.

The university is compelled to comply with the GST legislation and its associated rulings. There are tight deadlines which must be adhered to in order to ensure that business processes and systems are modified in time to ensure that the university's legal obligations are met.

The GST is to be levied on most supplies unless the supply concerned is designated GST free or input-taxed in which case the GST will not be payable on the supply. As GST is to be levied on most transactions, including acquisition of goods and services, input tax credits will generally be available to registered enterprises for GST payable.

There are two critical elements of the GST which faculties/divisions must consider:

1) If goods or services have been purchased, has the GST charged been correctly identified so that an input credit can be claimed? If the answer is yes then the GST will not impact on costs. If the answer is no however, then the faculty/division will lose 1/11 of the revenue which will have to be remitted to the ATO.

2) If goods or services are provided to parties external to the university, has the appropriate amount of GST been charged? If yes then there will be no impact on revenue. If the answer is no, the faculty/division will lose 1/11 of the revenue which will have to be remitted to the ATO.

Faculties/divisions have to understand the GST implications of transactions they enter into and ensure that they are appropriately reflected within the university's finance system or they will bear the burden of the GST. Some may feel that an administrator should deal with all of the issues relating to the GST rather than faculties/divisions. This however is not practical given that it is the person entering into the transaction who must understand its nature and therefore the GST consequences. This is not something an administrator can guess or have a default for. There are significant penalties for enterprises if they fail to comply with the GST legislation.

It is therefore important that anyone involved in purchasing or selling goods and services (including research or consultancy) have an understanding of the GST requirements in relation to these activities.

All GST enquiries should be directed to Mrs Christina Murdoch, Director, Financial Services (ext 3349 or email bucans@admin.newcastle.edu.au).
Thirty years in Sports Union family

Margaret Heron, recently retired from the university, has a Newcastle bus driver to thank for her job as an Administrative Assistant to the University’s Sports Union that spanned 30 years.

When Margaret, a shy 19-year-old who had arrived in Newcastle from her native Scotland just a month or two before, was on her way to the newly established Shortland campus of the university in 1967, she asked the driver to help her. “I had applied for a few jobs at the university – and I was asked to come for an interview for an Office Assistant job in the McMullin Building,” Margaret recalls. “I plucked up the courage to ask the driver if he could let me know when we reached the university stop.”

The driver forgot to tell her and she missed the interview. It proved to be a happy mistake, however, when she was offered a job with the Sports Union and began work in a demountable building near the Shortland Union. “The Sports Union had no pavilion then and all the cricket and rugby gear was stored in the office,” Margaret said. “The whole university was being built and the Sports Union was the poor relation.”

Despite having to beg, borrow and steal equipment and facilities, the Sports Union survived and achieved the seemingly impossible task of transforming the university’s sporting facilities to be some of the most impressive of any Australian campus. When Margaret began in 1967, there were only four clubs – cricket, rugby, rowing and athletics. Today there is a diverse collection of recreational and sporting clubs affiliated with the Union.

Margaret fondly remembers having to be a jack-of-all-trades during her 30 years with the SU, including decorator and caterer. “We’ve been in temporary offices all our working lives virtually,” Margaret says of the Sports Union team. “At one stage we got really fed up with having different coloured curtains on every window and we couldn’t get any new ones, so we took them home to wash them, and they all shrank!”

Other treasured memories include entertaining the crew from the royal yacht Britannia and visiting cricket teams, as well as organisers of various inter-collegiate and later university games. “We had to do everything on a shoestring. We’d go to Woolies and buy the food and drink and serve and clean up afterwards. I don’t think you’d find too many admin assistants today who’d be prepared to do all that.”

Despite the unusual range of her duties (which at one time included organising accommodation for students and selling tickets to the graduation balls), Margaret has always enjoyed working for the Sports Union. The enjoyment of meeting new people has been a bonus to working in a “very happy environment”. Margaret is just one of a number of staff who have opted to continue working there for many years. “I’ve never thought of leaving the Sports Union,” she said. “It’s always been like a family.”

Margaret believes that the atmosphere is so upbeat in the SU because people love sport and most of the students and staff she has come into contact with in her working life have been involved because they wanted to be. “No one is forced to play sport, they do it because they want to. We see the happier side of the students.”

Margaret, who retired at the end of March, won’t be putting her feet up for awhile. She will spend time with her daughter Kristy, who is doing her Higher School Certificate this year, travel back to Scotland and Ireland with husband George to visit relations, and plans to do some charity work.

Challenging the tradition of arts funding

Australia must decide who we are, where we are going as a creative nation and consider where the more high profile arts feature in the bigger picture.

Dr Deborah Stevenson from the Faculty of Arts and Social Science has issued the challenge and addressed many aspects of arts funding and policy in her book *Art and Organisation: Making Australian Cultural Policy*.

“Federal arts funding has been slowly diminishing for the past twenty years or so, and there has been no analysis of the state of the arts since the 1980s,” Deborah explained.

She said that experimental and community arts ventures may be suffering because of reduced funding, the increasing need for organisations to look for other sources of revenue, and the shift of responsibility for arts funding from the Federal to State and Local governments.

“The problem is that we have not really looked at where we are headed as a creative nation. We have not considered whether the more ‘high profile’ arts such as the opera and classical music truly reflect who we are, or are unfairly receiving the lion’s share of the very limited public funding available,” Deborah said.

Her book traces the chequered and turbulent history of Australian arts policy over the last two decades. Issues such as the influence of commercial partnerships, and the social and economic consequences of changes to arts and cultural policy are also addressed in the book.

*Art and Organisation: Making Australian Cultural Policy* is published by the University of Queensland Press in association with the Australian Key Centre for Cultural and Media Policy. Copies are available at the Coop Bookshop.
Risk management

The university has from 1 January, 2000 placed its Industrial Special Risk insurance with UniMutual (an association of universities with a common insurance goal). UniMutual provides a range of information that is available to all university members and which is useful in risk management. It is intended to provide regular reports in Uninews to help staff to identify and assess risks, and to manage those risks in a way that will prevent loss and avoid the trials of an insurance recovery.

The following is based on material in UniMutual Newsletter Special Summer Edition 2000.

The following cases serve to illustrate the old maxim: "If a claim can happen, it will". They also demonstrate how seriously people and projects can be affected. They are real claims.

Case 1:
A research group received a substantial grant and was engaged in a commercial research project, in which it used reagents sourced from the USA. The reagents were worth about $75,000 and were kept in a cold room to maintain their temperature at or below eight degrees Celsius, above which they become unreliable and commercially worthless. The research project was due for completion on 31/12/98. Although the continued functioning of the cool room was critical to the timely success of the project, it was not under a maintenance contract, nor was any preventative maintenance carried out.

In late November, 1998 a sump bolt worked loose and lubricating oil was lost, causing the compressor to fail. This happened over a weekend when the temperature alarm on the cold room also worked loose and failed to function. These two failures combined to cause the spoilage of the reagents, thus delaying the project while replacements were obtained from overseas.

A little regular preventative maintenance would have prevented both failures. Even an acceptance that it is never wise to put "all one's eggs in one basket" should have meant that half the reagents were stored elsewhere and there would have been enough available to see them through in the short term, while additional supplies were procured.

Case 2:
A personal collection of rare books and a collection of approximately 4,000 botanical specimens and fossils laboriously gathered over a twelve-year period from three separate sites in south-eastern Australia were all housed in an alarmed, but unsprinklered building. This material, along with its attendant logbooks and databases, was to some extent irreplaceable, as two of the three sites are no longer accessible.

There was also the entire research project (specimens, notes, everything) of a PhD student accumulated over twelve years, which project had reached the point of finalising research results and commencing write-up.

These items were all totally destroyed in a serious fire early this year. The alarm did not operate due, it is thought, to the intense heat of the fire destroying the connection to the phone system. One of the worrying features of the loss is that a fire had been noticed some six hours earlier in some pine chips outside the building. Water was applied to the fire and it was thought to have been extinguished. Sadly, no one thought to have Security check it regularly, and it is now believed that this was probably the source of the conflagration which followed.

These cases have the common element of vulnerability to loss. The property was unique and had in the second case, cost enormous personal effort to create.

In each case is a dereliction of the duty to manage the risk. In Case 1, the group lacked the ability to maintain the equipment themselves, but they failed to engage others to do it. A maintenance agreement with an outside contractor would have transferred that risk to the outside contractor, or the university's own maintenance department might have been able to provide the service. Instead, the risk was ignored, the loss happened, and the university finished up bearing a hefty excess - probably at least five times as much as the cost of an annual maintenance agreement.

In Case 2, the backing up of computer data to another location is such an elementary precaution that it is a policy requirement. Failure to observe it will be expensive. The storage of notebooks, data and other "derivative" material separately from the source material would have ameliorated the loss somewhat, but the fundamental thing here is that such irreplaceable research should never have been housed in an unsprinklered building.

Unitunes in front again

Four university teams competed against more than 200 corporate teams in the Sparke Helmore Corporate Triathlon held at the end of February.

The course included a 500 metre swim along Horseshoe Beach (near Nobby's), a 20 kilometre bike ride from Horseshoe to Carrington and back twice, and a four kilometre run to the Bogey Hole and back to Horseshoe. The university excelled in the veteran events, with three members of the women's team, whose combined ages had to add up to 120 or more, winning their event, as did the three members of the mixed team whose combined ages equalled or exceeded 150.

The Unitunes teams competed in four divisions:
* Open Corporate Female: Louise Hermann, Charmain Eckersley, and Gay McDonell
* Open Corporate Mixed: Chris Dixon, Robert Millan and Sally Gordon
* Over 120's Corporate Female: Hilary Winchester, Helen Parker and Joy Lawrence
* Over 150's Corporate Mixed: Saxon White, Russell Jones and Estelle Moule.

The triathlon, held on February 27, raised around $12,000 for Hunter Medical Research.
During February, the Learning and Development Program of IESD hosted the visit of 22 academic and medical staff from two Korean colleges. These visitors had come to explore the use of Problem-based Learning as an instructional method and curriculum approach in nursing contexts. Their visit reciprocated a visit from Professor Penny Little (Director of PROBLARC) to Korea last year. During their five days at the University, our Korean visitors participated in seminars and worked with students of the Faculty of Nursing during their classes. Despite language barriers, they were readily able to assimilate the various presentations and were able to take a favourable impression of problem-based learning to their respective institutions.

PROBLARC, the Problem-Based Learning Assessment and Research Centre has been established since 1987 as a Centre for Excellence in problem-based learning. The Centre is located within the Learning and Development Program in IESD and plays an active role in the development of problem-based programs, both within the University and in consultancies to institutions in Australia and overseas. It has established a reputation as one of the leading groups in the field. Clients include educators from many different professional and discipline areas, with varying levels of experience in the general area of problem-based learning.

To commemorate their visit the Vice-Chancellor presented each member of the visiting parties with certificates during an informal ceremony. He was assisted by Professor Penny Little, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (External Relations), Professor Margaret McMillan (Dean of the Faculty of Nursing), Linda O'Brien (Executive Director, IESD), and Associate Professor Penny Little and Jane Conway (PROBLARC).

Letter to the editor

Whilst I am delighted that again this year the front cover of the Uninews features the “O” Week activities of residents from Edwards Hall, I am disappointed that there is no acknowledgement that there is no program put in place by the Residential Accommodation Unit.

“O” Week activities for all three residential colleges began on Sunday, February 13 and the photo of Johanna Flinn on the front cover [of the March edition] captures the exuberance and excitement that was evident at all the activities undertaken. It was, however, taken on the Tuesday prior to the commencement of the university program.

An extraordinary amount of time and effort by the Wardens is spent planning the “O” Week activities for the hundreds of new residents who have chosen to make the colleges their home. It is with a sense of pride that I thank you for featuring Edwards Hall residents on the 1999 and 2000 Uninews covers as well as the background features for the “O” Week programs of both the Callaghan and Central Coast campuses.

As the cover details imply, the Dolphin Watch Cruise was part of the University “O” Week program, rather than the specific residential program, it would be appreciated if any further published photos from the college give credit where it is due.

It is pleasing to see that the photographer has been acknowledged, as Edwards Hall is most grateful for the professionalism and commitment of John Freund in providing an excellent photographic coverage of all of our activities. Such records have demonstrated excellent PR for the many, many parents who regularly visit our hall.

The Australian and international first year residents of Edwards Hall would be delighted to give you a feature story on the fun activities undertaken during “O” Week, all of which helped them make many friends, minimise homesickness and settle into their academic studies at the university.

Mrs Norma Cairns
Warden, Edwards Hall
UNINews Page 17
To Rent
Two bedroom house in Hamilton, fully furnished, available from last week of June for seven months. Contact Vannak Ph 4969 3927 (AH) or ext 6000 (W)
Family home at 36 Ridgeway Road will be available for rental between 1 June 2000 and 26 February 2001. There are 3 double bedrooms available plus a possible single, and ample lounge, dining, sunroom (very large) with breakfast and study areas included. Carport space for 3 cars. Contact Professor Eric Colhoun 4921 5082 of geogenc@cc.newcastle.edu.au
For Sale
Lamkoke A4/A3 laminator, brand new only $300. Please contact Brid, Chris or Justine on ext 6006 or telephone 4968 1281
1985 Toyota Corolla CS, auto, air cond, reg 1/2001, great 1st car, $3500 ono, phone Pam on ext 8874
Car Pool Mates Wanted
Do you travel from the Central Coast-if so are you interested in car pooling? Contact Pam at the CT Information Desk or call ext 8874 for more info.
Career Woman of the Year
The City of Newcastle Business & Professional Women’s Club is seeking nominations for their inaugural Career Woman of the Year award. Criteria include that the candidate lives or works in the Newcastle Local Government Area, is employed or self-employed, and displays qualities that make her outstanding as a career woman. Nominations close 20 June, 2000. For information or an application contact Mardi Ryan, ext 7433, email mryan@mail.newcastle.edu.au
Defuse diabeties
Diabetes Risk Assessment Test
Do you know if you are at risk of diabetes?
Diabetes is one of the most undiagnosed conditions in this country, so come and see us at the Health Service if you are:
* Over 50, and have a family history of diabetes or, have high blood pressure or, if you are overweight
* Over 65, have heart disease, had high blood sugar levels during pregnancy (gestational diabetes), or had a borderline high blood sugar test
Some cultural groups are at higher risk of developing Type 2 diabetes at a younger age and should be tested earlier. If you are aged over 35 and come from one of the following cultural backgrounds, come and see us at the Health Service if you are:
* Aboriginal or a Torres Strait Islander
* A Pacific Islander, a person from the Indian subcontinent or a person from a Chinese cultural background. University Health Service ext 6000, fax 6950

New Appointments
Stephen Bali
Central Coast Campus - School of Business
Allan Bath jnr
International House
Clare Collins
School of Health Sciences - Nutrition and Dietetics
Kim Colyvas
School of Mathematical and Phys. Sciences - Physics
Dale Crowther
Central Coast Campus - Information Resource Centre
Heather Davey
School of Pop. Health Stud - Behavioural Science
Susannah Ether
International House
Stuart Ferguson
Modern Languages
Peter Gray-Bratton
Information Resources Program
Ric Herbert
Central Coast Campus - School of Business
Carol Hurst
Student Administration Unit
Kylie James
Information Resources Program
Johanna May
School of Pop. Health Stud - CCEB
Julian Meyrick
Drama
Wei Ooi
Architecture
Stephen Richardson
Chemical Engineering
Adam Schultz
International House
Kenneth Thompson
Information Systems Program
Elaine Whitby
Faculty of Nursing
Greg Charlton
Faculty of Economics & Commerce
Josh Cox
Revenue
Belinda Croker
Revenue
Susan Day
Client Services Program
Denise Hurley
School of Biomedical Sciences - Immun and Micro
Dennis Hull
School of Management
Latha Lewis
Estates & Services
Brent Matthews
Revenue
Richard Merifield
Civil Engineering & Environmental Engineering
Charla Ramasinghe
School of Biomedical Sciences - Immun and Micro
Heather Redman
Marketing & Media Services
Vanessa Traynor
School of Medical Practice - Gen Pract
Health, Safety and Development

Rehabilitation

More people die from work-related causes in Australia each year than in car accidents, according to Workcover. In the 1996 - 97 financial year, 2900 people died as a result of workplace accidents or occupational diseases, while road deaths numbered 2030.

Is it any wonder then that for decades governments and employers across Australia have been grappling with the development of effective and efficient injury management schemes for the nation’s workforce? In NSW the most recent effort in this regard is the Workplace Injury Management and Workers’ Compensation Act 1998. This emphasises a safe, timely and durable return to work for workers who experience a significant work related injury or illness.

Employees, insurers, medical practitioners and workers (and their Unions if required) must develop and implement Injury Management Plans. Under the Act, there is an obligation to ensure that this coordinated approach is used whenever a worker is injured to such an extent that they cannot carry out their normal duties for more than seven days.

The process by which injured workers are restored to their best possible health and function is known as rehabilitation. The university is able to implement a rehabilitation process for every injured person through its Rehabilitation Coordinator, Maxine Rennard. Maxine is part of the Health, Safety & Development unit in HRMB (ext 8847). Where possible the university will also assist with rehabilitation for non work-related injuries.

The University of Newcastle’s Rehabilitation Policy can be found on noticeboards throughout its campuses. For serious injuries, a return-to-work program must be prepared. This can involve one or more of several options:

• undertaking “suitable duties” (that is, meaningful work that is within the capacity of the worker to perform) in the worker’s normal workplace
• undertaking suitable duties in another workplace at the university
• undertaking suitable duties at a workplace external to the university

These duties might be able to be carried out full time or for a restricted number of work hours or days per week. The latter is carried out under a graduated return-to-work with the aim of gradually moving to full time work.

Undoubtedly, the most effective return-to-work programs usually involve activities in the normal workplace. Because of this, the supervisor of any person who is injured in the course of work is encouraged to help the Rehabilitation Coordinator develop duties that are based on familiar activities. Depending on the injury and the requirements of the original position, it may be necessary to provide suitable duties elsewhere. Often this is arranged through the Rehabilitation Coordinator identifying an appropriate alternative at the university. This is not always an easy task, despite the broad range of activities undertaken by the university. It is only possible through the support of workplace supervisors, who understand both the benefits to their work area and, of course, to the worker.

The injured worker also has an obligation to participate in the rehabilitation process through recognising the restrictions and understanding that, for a while, alternative duties may be necessary. Anyone who refuses to participate in the process may lose access to the weekly benefits provided by the university’s workers compensation insurer.

The underlying principle of rehabilitation is to ensure that everything possible is done to enable injured workers to return to the workforce as soon as possible and to minimise the physical, psychological, social, vocational and economic consequences of work injuries.

Next month: Electrical Safety

Brock and Kolla are back!

Fans of Professor Barry Maitland’s crime fiction were delighted by the launch of another in the Brock and Kolla series, Silvermeadow, at the Coop Bookshop last month. Barry, Dean of the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Design, has won awards for his fiction. He is pictured (at left) being congratulated by Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Brian English at the launch on March 21.

www.nga.net.au/aps

Graduate recruitment online. Internet employment company, nga.net will provide online recruitment services to a consortium of APS agencies including the Department of Communications, IT and the Arts; the Department of Family and Community Services; the Department of Employment Workplace Relations and Small Business; Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs; and the Department of Transport & Regional Services. Students and graduates can apply for graduate programs with these departments via this website.

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Students eager to get in the swim

When Dr Ken Zimmerman's father introduced him to diving at the tender age of five, little did he know that it would become a life-long passion for his son. Nor would he have imagined the level of interest and enthusiasm being generated by the scientific diving and underwater research technique course Ken has developed.

The third-year subject, Scientific Diving and Underwater Research Techniques, is part of the Marine Science specialisation at the Central Coast Campus. It is unique in that it has a Level 1 commercial scuba certification embedded in the subject.

Ken says that for too long, sport diving certifications have been the minimal requirement for individuals involved in underwater research, which not only produced less efficient results but also put the divers at considerable risk. By having the commercial diving certification as an integral part of the subject, the Australian government requirement is addressed, without the students having to undertake additional, and undoubtedly expensive, specialist diving tuition.

"If you like, it's a sort of 'one stop shop' for scientific diving and underwater research," says Ken. "We are working in collaboration with the Dive Bell, a commercial diving training school in Townsville, which will provide the actual commercial scuba certification. This certification has international recognition with cross certification through the Norwegian Petroleum Standards Directorate, which sets the world's standards for commercial diving," he says.

The subject will be intensive with lectures, laboratory work, fieldwork and diving followed by a 10-day camp to finalise the certification. Students are required to have physics knowledge and a certain level of diving skill with a minimum of 50 hours underwater time. They are also required to have three scuba first aid certifications and a current commercial diving medical certificate.

Ken says the subject has attracted a lot of interest. "We already have our full complement of 15 students ready to start next semester," he says.

Ken, who has been research diving for 35 years and has considerable international experience, is naturally excited about the subject that has taken about eight years to develop. He feels the course will set Central Coast Campus graduates apart because they will develop skills as highly qualified scientific divers. He says there are a surprising number of employers who use the services of commercial divers. A scientific diver would have skills that surpass these and make them very attractive to employers.

"Organisations such as coastal councils, fisheries and government and educational facilities as well as major consultancies and off-shore oil rigs would be looking for the types of skills possessed by our graduates."

Ken stresses the course is not just about teaching diving as such. "We are teaching underwater research techniques with the bonus of adding to their knowledge of diving," he says. "Our graduates will have an edge which will make them highly competitive in the field of aquatic research.

"It is the only course of its type in Australia and as far as we know the only one in the world," he says.