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• University heads national Centre of Excellence page 10
• Higher education on budget agenda – Vice-Chancellor’s column page 2
• University staff win Centenary Medals page 3
• Australian University Games launched in Newcastle page 6
For the first time in many years, higher education policy and funding was one of the major areas to be addressed in the 2003 Federal Budget released last month. This followed on from the Crossroads Review of the sector over the past 12 months.

There are many policy changes advised, however the good news is that there will be a major enhancement in funding for the sector of $1.5 billion over the next four years.

The key principles underpinning the reforms are described as sustainability through the provision of greater flexibility to universities; quality with a higher level of emphasis on teaching and learning outcomes; equity through removal of barriers and retention of under-represented groups; and diversity through universities forging distinctive missions and supporting more collaboration across the sector and with business and communities.

A new Commonwealth Grants Scheme for teaching and learning will replace the system of block grants. Following annual negotiations with the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST), a specific number of Government supported places will be funded in particular course disciplines for undergraduate, specified coursework postgraduate and enabling programs, each at different funding levels. The university will be fully funded for these places up to one percent beyond the funded load, but will be penalised for any enrolments beyond a two percent limit.

Funding per student will increase by 2.5 percent from 2005 growing to 7.5 percent by 2007 as long as the university adheres to National Governance Protocols and Workplace Relations policies. Both represent significant challenges for the university.

From 2004, an additional $122.6 million over four years will be provided to universities with regional campuses located outside a mainland state capital in a population center with fewer than 250,000 people. Unfortunately, the criteria exclude the Callaghan Campus from gaining access to this support even though the university has been recognised as a regional university under the Regional Protection Scheme for some years. We are still negotiating with DEST at the time of writing this column on the regional status of the Otway Campus, which has also been excluded. Given the size and stage of development of this Campus, this is a major issue for us and for the Central Coast community.

There will be 25,000 new Commonwealth supported places to replace marginally funded places from 2005, with the distribution being made according to Government priorities, taking account of labour market needs of the states and territories. We are hopeful of gaining 750 new places over the three to four year period, which will greatly assist

### University staff recognised with centenary medals

Many current and former staff, associates and honorary degree recipients from the University have been honoured with Centenary Medals.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor Brian English says the University community is proud that so many medals were presented to staff and associates.

"These medals recognise contributions to a wide range of areas in the Australian community including education, research and community service."

Centenary Medal recipients from the University include:

- Chancellor, Richard Charlton, for service to society in technological industries;
- Former Chancellor, The Hon Elizabeth Evatt AC, former Chief Justice of the Family Court;
- Vice-Chancellor Professor Roger Holmes, for service to higher education, particularly for developing a major research university;
- Professor Adrian Page, Pro Vice-Chancellor Engineering and Built Environment, for long and outstanding service to the practice and application of science and engineering;
- Professor Graham Goodwin of the Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment, for service to Australian society and science in systems and control theory;
- Professor Cliff Hooker of the Faculty of Education and Arts, for service to Australian society and the humanities in the study of philosophy and religion;
- Professor Graeme Jameson of the Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment, for service to Australian society and science in chemical engineering;
- Professor Warren Pengilley of the Faculty of Business and Law, for devotion to the law, the enhancement of education and promoting international understanding;
- Professor Alan Roberts of the Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment, for service to society in bulk material handling and powder technology;
with developments at Callaghan, Ourimbah (and other Central Coast Campuses) and Port Macquarie on the mid-north coast of NSW. Cooperation and partnership with the NSW TAFE will be an important prerequisite for these latter developments.

Additional funding will be provided to areas of national priority including 745 additional places by 2008 in teaching and nursing. Additional funding for existing nursing places will begin in 2004, with a further 210 places in regional campuses rising to 574 places by 2007. Extra funding for existing teaching places will commence in 2005.

This budget will introduce a higher education learning entitlement for all Australian and New Zealand citizens and holders of Australian permanent visas providing entitlement for five years equivalent full-time study in a Commonwealth supported place. These students will be eligible for a subsidised loan under HECS-HELP (Higher Education Loans Program). Students will need a Commonwealth Higher Education Support Number to be identified under this scheme.

The number of domestic full fee-paying students in an undergraduate course has been increased from 25 to 50 percent, if a university has met its undergraduate load. Income contingent loans, called FEE-HELP, will be available to undergraduate and coursework postgraduate students paying full fees (non-HECS). OS-HELP will assist full-time undergraduate students in Commonwealth supported places to study overseas for one or two semesters. Debts accrued under FEE-HELP and OS-HELP will be indexed to the CPI plus 3.5 percent pa interest for a maximum of 10 years.

Two Commonwealth scholarship programs will be introduced in 2004 to assist rural and regional low socio-economic and Indigenous students: Commonwealth Education Cost Scholarships with a stipend of $2000 pa for up to four years; and the Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarship providing $4000 pa also for up to four years.

A Learning and Teaching Performance Fund worth $83.8 million will be introduced in 2006-2007 to reward universities demonstrating excellence. In 2004, a new National Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education will be established, and the Australian Teaching Awards scheme will be expanded, providing 210 awards at $10,000 each and 40 awards at $25,000 each.

From 2005, a further $20 million will be provided for a Collaboration and Structural Reform Fund to support innovation and collaboration between universities and other education providers, business, industry, professional associations and community groups.

There are many issues for the University to consider as a result of this budget, which will take some time and consultation with stakeholders to work our way through. Given the comprehensive nature of the changes, however, the process of review of the impact of the 2003 budget will need to commence within the next few months.

I am confident that we can readily adapt and thrive in this new funding and policy environment and invite all of you to participate strongly in this planning. You will find that many additional decisions need to be made by the university, including the setting of fee levels, allocating scholarships, changing the discipline mix, determining major projects for regional engagement, or increasing access to our programs through fees.

Unfortunately, there were no changes in the current indexation arrangements. With additional contestable funds available, however, we will have opportunities to gain more resources to assist with our teaching and community service programs. The budget introduces a myriad of changes in Australian higher education, many of which I think will be welcomed by the sector.

Roger S Holmes
Vice-Chancellor and President

- Professor Scott Sloan, Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment, for service to Australian society in civil and geotechnical engineering;
- Professor Harold Tarrant, Faculty of Education and Arts, for service to society in the study of ancient philosophy and classical studies;
- Professor Graham Vimpani, Faculty of Health, for service to children and early childhood research and development;
- Dianne Pascoe of Human Resource Services, for service to the Lake Macquarie City Sports Council;
- Philip Sketchley, Faculty of Education and Arts, for service to the community through fundraising, and sharing of musical talents;
- Pat Flowers, for service to the community;
- Shirley Schulz-Robinson, for service to the community as a clinician and manager in nursing;
- Laurel Ann Williams, for service to the cultural understanding of local Aboriginal communities;
- Mr James Hunt, Faculty of Business and Law (Ourimbah), for service as an outstanding teacher and researcher; and
- Emeritus Professor John Burrows, for service to Australian society and the humanities in the study of English literature.

Ten of the University's honorary degree recipients also received Centenary Medals. They are Dr John Burgess, Emeritus Professor Lois Bryson, Archbishop Peter Carney, Belinda Clark, Joy Cummings, William Edwards, June Heinrich, Justice Michael McHugh, Eric Richardson and Anne Von Bertouch.

Federal Member for Newcastle Sharon Grierson presents the Centenary Medal award to Professor Warren Pengilly last month
Providing a safe environment for student growth

For many of the students resident in the University's Edwards Hall (affectionately known as Ted), the commencement dinner put on by the new Head of College Luce Andrews was enough to give them an insight into his philosophy of inclusion. Others needed to hear him speak.

Luce, who came to Edwards Hall from the Australian National University (ANU) in February this year, told the students that their stay in the college gives them an opportunity. An opportunity to step aside from the self that they brought with them to university - the self who was part of a family and a community - and to experiment with different selves, to try their wings and see which ones fit, which ones lift them highest.

"I see my role as providing a supportive and safe environment in which students can grow," he said. "Their time in college provides them with an opportunity they may never have again to reinvent themselves and I want them to learn something about themselves. I would hate for them to be exactly the same person when they leave."

Luce comes well prepared to offer his student charges support in their transition from school to independent life. He spent two years as Dean of ANU's Fenner Hall, a residential college housing 475 students, where he undertook a similar role to that of Head of Edwards Hall - responsible for the pastoral, academic progress and welfare of the students. He is a psychologist, who specialised in behaviourial medicine, working in crisis psychology for six years, including responsibility for homeless people in a 220-bed hostel in Canberra.

"I left Australia when I was 16 to study in Europe and when I returned at the age of 25, I studied psychology at the University of Sydney, finishing my degree at the University of Western Sydney. My first job was looking at the quality of care for HIV women and men in Canberra and restructuring the budget for that sector. By the time I came to work with homeless people, I was ripe to learn and I learned a lot of my philosophy from them, particularly the older people."

Luce describes himself as an existentialist therapist - a believer in the creed that life rarely runs smoothly and that anxiety and stress is part of what happens in modern life. It is the way in which people choose to respond to the inevitable sticks and stones life throws at them that determines their future. After a short stint in Thailand on a research project, Luce returned to Canberra and accepted an offer to join the counselling service at ANU, where he worked for 12 months before taking on the Deanship at Fenner.

"When you work in crisis counselling, you're never sure how things turn out for people," he said. "You can help people to move past a problem in their lives and after a number of sessions, they leave. The big attraction of working with college students is that you get to see the students grow and develop and there's a real feeling of satisfaction and happiness to see them go out into the world."

There are 375 students living in Ted - 300 in Burnet and Cutler houses, which are fully catered, providing 14 meals a week in their communal dining hall, and 75 in self-catering units with five students per household. The college was established in 1972 and the self-catering units added in the 80s. Twenty five percent of residents are international students.

Luce acknowledges the tradition of the Hall, with students wearing academic gowns to the commencement dinner and other formal occasions. He recognises the strong sense of community that comes from students following their parents, siblings and neighbours to attend Ted. He loves the experience of building and working within a community and is grateful that he came to Newcastle during a time of change for the University that allows him to propose change in an accepting environment.

Changes he plans to make at Edwards Hall include an increase in academic stimulation for students. One of his proposals is to introduce an inter-collegiate Arts Shield that will recognise that some students prefer to display their prowess at debating or public speaking than on the sporting field. He thinks college should be supportive for the young adults who live there but also enlivening and challenging.

But change only comes for Luce with consultation. It is the students who determine what is important in their environment. He consults closely with 18 student staff members who keep him informed of any issues or problems amongst their peers. He has also made it his business to learn all he can about the University - the faculty staff, the course structures, the rules that govern student life - in order to increase his effectiveness as a student advocate.

"Students are going to live life anyway and you get nowhere by trying to be controlling," he said. "I try to be a slightly older person who has fallen on his face before who can try and help them if it all goes pear-shaped."

"But the voice of my grandmother rings in my head - you're a long time dead."
Business and Law honours outstanding students

The Faculty of Business and Law recognised the outstanding academic performance of its students in 2002 with the inaugural Scholarships and Prize Giving Ceremony held in the Great Hall in May.

Pro Vice Chancellor Bernard Carey said that many of the scholarships and prizes presented at the ceremony highlighted the degree of support the Faculty enjoys from the community, particularly the business community of Newcastle and the Hunter.

"We value this greatly," he said. "I am particularly happy to note that some of our sponsors are able to be represented here today, to present to delighted recipients the scholarship or prize bearing the sponsor's name. We thank all our sponsors for their support."

There are a large number of prizes in the Faculty, ranging in value from $100 to over $900. Some have been established to remember a valued person - for example, the S.D Lindgren Memorial Prize, sponsored by Mr Justice Kevin Lindgren, and the Edward St John Memorial Prize in Jurisprudence, established by the late Professor Godfrey Tanner. Others have been created by organisations with an interest in business or law, to encourage students in particular areas of study, for instance CPA Australia offers a range of prizes in different accounting courses.

Scholarships were presented in two main categories: those funded by the Faculty and those funded by outside bodies such as Friends of the University, the Hunter Valley Law Society and the group of corporate sponsors who fund the Accounting and Finance Scholarships, which are worth over $60,000.

Professor Carey presented the Dean's Medal, which recognises the best student of 2002 who has achieved first class honours but has just missed out on receiving a University Medal, to Christopher Stanton. Dr Patricia Stanton accepted the medal on behalf of her son, who was unable to attend the ceremony.

Major funding for cancer research

Hunter Medical Research Institute (HMRI) researcher Associate Professor Darren Shafren has been working for several years on virus-mediated killing of human cancer cells and will receive the BIF grant to expand this study to include breast and prostate cancer.

Matt McNamara CEO of SciCapital Pty Ltd, an early stage biomedical venture capital company, has committed to match the federal funding.

This innovative field of research by A/Professor Darren Shafren was initially funded by the Greater Building Society through grants to HMRI and successful research outcomes were instrumental in the formation of ViroTarg. ViroTarg Pty Ltd is a start up company established by TUNRA.

"Preclinical tests have shown encouraging results in breast and prostate cancer and the research is poised for the next stage," A/Professor Shafren said. "This funding boost will guarantee the research is given its best possible chance of success, and we are confident of announcing details of significant progress by the end of 2003."

Breast cancer is the most frequently diagnosed cancer in Australian women, with more than 10,000 patients treated per year. A similar number of men are treated for prostate cancer, which is the most frequently diagnosed cancer in Australian men.

The commercialisation of this project is led by TUNRA and ViroTarg. A/Professor Shafren is an HMRI researcher in the School of Biomedical Sciences in the Faculty of Health.
The 21 different sports will be played at venues on the Callaghan campus and on sporting fields throughout the community.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) Professor Ron MacDonald, speaking on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor at the launch, said that the Australian University Games is one of the major events on the national sporting calendar.

"The University takes a great deal of pride in hosting the Australian University Games," he said. "Newcastle is the first regional university asked to host them in the history of the Games."

Hosting the AUG provides an opportunity for the University to strengthen its ties to the Hunter community and to demonstrate to the visiting athletes and their supporters what great facilities the region and the University have to offer.

"The fact that the University is the host of the 2003 University Games is an indication of the commitment it has put into its sporting facilities over the past five years, including the world class Forum Sports and Aquatic Centre," Professor MacDonald said.

Lord Mayor Cr John Tate said Newcastle is becoming a premier host for games of this kind and offers the facilities, abilities and enthusiasm necessary to making them a success.

"Newcastle is a proud sporting city and those who visit during the Games will be able to tell it has a strong, vibrant community spirit," he said.

President of Australian University Sport (a national sporting organisation with members from every university in Australia) Mr John White said Australian universities believe strongly in the benefits of providing sporting opportunities to students.

"The benefits of sport have been widely recognised and verified by studies," he said. "Sport continues to attract and involve more students at universities and we are increasingly find sporting achievement in the CVs of today's leaders."

Mr White introduced the Newcastle students who will act as ambassadors for the Games, including touch football and rugby player Tobie McGann, whose face adorns the posters promoting the event. The other athletes, who represent the breadth of sporting talent at the University, were Peter Ritchie (soccer), Krystle Hitchcock (diving), Nathan Jones (touch/rugby) and Joshua Ross (athletics).

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Student sprinter sets sights on Olympics

First year social science student Joshua Ross burst onto the national athletics scene when he won the $54,000 Australia Post Stawell Gift in April.

Joshua defeated a world-class field, including Ikika Urama from Nigeria, Christian Malcolm from Wales and Jason Hunte from Barbados to win the 120m sprint.

Now an ambassador for the 2003 Australian University Games, to be held at the University in September, Joshua said his win had surprised him.

"I'm still on cloud nine," the 22-year old from Gosford said. "I had a full 12 months of training under my belt but I didn't think I'd be running like that."

Joshua started his sprinting career at the age of eight, when he joined the Woy Woy Little Athletics Club. Like many young sportsmen, however, he got sick of running and stopped training when he was 16.

"When the Sydney Olympics came on, I watched the sprinting and it was as though something switched on inside me," Joshua said. "I knew I had to go back to training."

Joshua began training with Gosford coach Gerry Thomas, who passed away two years ago. He attributes much of his current success to Gerry, devoting his Stawell Gift win to his late coach.

"He got me started again. He bought me my first pair of spikes."

Joshua, who left Henry Kendall High School at Gosford at the end of Year 10, completed the University's Open Foundation Course last year. He is currently enrolled in a Bachelor of Social Sciences and juggling his full-time studies with his athletics training regime, which sees him spend at least two hours a day, six days a week running.

"I will do a few more pro running races before getting onto the amateur circuit later in the season," he said. "My long term goal is to compete for Australia at the Athens Olympics."
Travelling scholarships awarded

This year's Kelver Hartley Travelling Scholarship and a Grant-in-Aid from the Hartley Bequest were awarded at a presentation ceremony in the Faculty of Education and Arts in April.

Tyrone Crisp, who is enrolled in a combined Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Mathematics program, won the Travelling Scholarship.

Tyrone, a former Merewether High School student, studied French to year 10 but dropped language studies to concentrate on science and mathematics in the higher school certificate. When he took it up again at University as a pleasant diversion from his mathematics studies, he excelled at it and has won the prestigious grant to study in France for six months.

The scholarship pays all expenses including travel, enrolment fees, tuition and accommodation and will allow Tyrone to undertake a five-week intensive language course in Vichy, a two-week cultural tour of Paris and one semester of language study at Besançon. It also provides him with a living allowance.

Director of the Hartley Bequest Program, Emeritus Professor Ken Dutton, says the scholarships are the most generous scholarships for French students in Australia and among the most generous in the world. They are made possible by the bequest of former University language professor Kelver Hartley, who lived in self-imposed poverty to pursue his desire to raise $1 million for students to travel to France. He took his own life in despair at the stock market crash in 1987 but, by the time his estate was finalised, his bequest to the University exceeded $2 million.

Tyrone, who took his first overseas trip to Morocco last summer, is eagerly anticipating his time in France.

"I'm looking forward to the whole experience but particularly the chance to improve my language skills," he said, "especially spoken word aspects of the language, which are impossible to perfect outside of a French-speaking country. I'm also really interested in French culture."

Tyrone achieved a high distinction average in his French studies at the University. French lecturer Dr Alistair Rolls, who taught Tyrone, said: "He is the most fantastic undergraduate student I have taught anywhere, either here in Newcastle or in Nottingham, where I came from."

Tyrone, who plans to travel in Europe and the UK during his study breaks, will complete his mathematics honours year when he returns from France in February next year.

Doctoral student Vannak Bollen, who won a Hartley Travelling Scholarship in 2000, was awarded a Grant-in-Aid to carry out research in France later this year. Vannak came to Australia as a refugee after losing her family in the war in her native Cambodia. She worked in the University's Health Service before beginning her Arts degree, majoring in French. Her thesis examines Cambodian authors writing in French.

"Although I had some French language background, the travelling scholarship was very useful to me and I came back from studying in France with a lot more confidence," she said. "This time I plan to spend time in Paris, mainly researching in the library but also meeting and interviewing writers and historians, and other researchers from France and Cambodia."

Another French student, Jeremy Noonan, has been awarded a Kelver Hartley Postgraduate Scholarship to undertake the second year of his International Law studies in La Rochelle, France.

The awards were presented to Tyrone and Vannak by Pro Vice-Chancellor of Education and Arts Terry Lovat.
Double delight for author

The excitement of graduating after years of study was heightened for Bachelor of Arts graduate Clemency Morony by the simultaneous release of her book.

Clemency who graduated at the Ourimbah campus last month with a history and politics major, is author of an incisive book about Australia's part in the Pacific during World War II. Even though the book, entitled *Sand By Angels*, is just being released, it is already in its second print run having been pre-sold to Scholastic Australia, Scholastic New Zealand, selected book stores and also numerous private school project material.

Although directed at young people between the ages of 11 and 15, it is a book adults can learn from as well.

"It is the story of Arthur Pratt, an under-age enlistee who served at Shaggy Ridge in New Guinea," Clemency said. "His granddaughter asks him about his medals and through her naive persistence Arthur opens up about the war in the Pacific.

"I wanted to write the book because I became aware that our younger generation didn't have any real concept of Australia's role in the Pacific theatre of the Second World War and how close the war came to Australia. Even though a lot of young people are now taking part in Anzac Day marches and proudly wearing the medals of their grandfathers, they don't have a strong knowledge of the circumstances in which those medals were awarded."

Although the events described have been thoroughly researched, the book has been written as fiction to present the facts in a style that isn't confronting. The narrative style allows young people to identify with the educational content. Arthur Pratt, from Berkeley Vale on the Central Coast, however, is real and so are his experiences.

"I am particularly thrilled that Rusty Priest, recently retired President of the NSW Branch of the RSL paid me the honour of writing the foreword," Clemency said.

Clemency has decided to embark on an Honours program. An outstanding student, she has won a Dean's Award for Academic Merit in each of her three years of study and was named as Central Coast 'Young Career Woman of the Year' in 1999.

*Sand By Angels* has been published by Lexington Avenue Press and is available through bookshops.

Challenge plans nationwide expansion

"The Science and Engineering Challenge represents a commitment to the future growth of the enabling sciences throughout Australia," Mr McGauran said.

A/Professor O'Connor says that NSW Board of Studies figures show that schools participating in the Challenge have a dramatic turnaround in participation in the enabling sciences in secondary schools.

"This is a direct result of the Challenge and its presentation of what a career in science and engineering entails," he said. "The Challenge has been responsible for turnarounds of 40 percent in year 11 physics enrolments, 20 percent in chemistry and 25 percent in Extension Mathematics in its first year. There is no other program succeeding at this level to address the declining participation in the enabling sciences in Australia."

The Science and Engineering Challenge is an initiative of the Faculties of Science and IT, and Engineering and Built Environment. The program, aimed at year 10 students, combines a range of fun and interesting activities, from building a robot to solving a virtual maze.

"The success of the Challenge speaks for itself," said A/Professor O'Connor, "growing from 14 schools in 2000 to over 120 in 2003."

The program has received the International Institute of Physics (UK) Public Awareness of Physics Award 2002, been awarded the maximum National Science Week grants for the last two years, and winning a 2003 Engineering Excellence Award.

"We plan to take the Science and Engineering Challenge to schools nationwide and we will be working with the Federal and state governments, and sponsors to achieve the same results nationally," A/Professor O'Connor said.
Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome

While there has been a great deal of media attention on the respiratory illness known as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), medical authorities are now saying it appears to be less infectious than influenza.

Authorities in Australia and the World Health Organisation have issued warnings concerning SARS, particularly in relation to the countries most affected – China (especially Guangdong Province and Beijing), Hong Kong, Singapore, Hanoi, Vietnam and Canada (Toronto): However, the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing has advised that the risk of contracting SARS is low.

Pro Vice-Chancellor of the University’s Faculty of Health, Professor John Marley, said the risk of injuring yourself while driving your car to work at the University was probably far greater.

“Like any viral illness, such as influenza, SARS presents the most risk to those who are elderly or unwell,” he said. “Evidence has shown that close personal contact with an infected person is generally needed for the infective agent to spread.”

Most cases of the virus so far have occurred in hospital workers who have cared for SARS patients and the family members of patients. The incubation period is in the range of two to 10 days and the virus particles live for only two to three days outside the body, so there is no risk to people in Australia who handle articles arriving from affected areas.

Professor Marley says that University staff travelling to SARS affected areas should be in good health, aware of general health provisions and good personal hygiene, particularly hand washing.

“The SARS threat in Toronto has been downgraded recently and there appears to be some evidence that the virus will follow the pattern of influenza,” he said. “The risk of a healthy, young person contracting the virus is extremely low”

If you have visited a SARS affected area, however, and become unwell with fever and respiratory symptoms within 10 days of leaving the area, you should seek urgent medical advice. Organisers of conferences, meetings, seminars and classes should contact the Medical Director in the University Health Service on ext 16000 urgently for advice if a visitor or student exhibits the symptoms identified below while at the University.

- high fever (more than 38°C); AND
- one or more respiratory symptoms including cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, AND one or more of the following:
- close contact, within 10 days of onset of symptoms, with a person who has been diagnosed with SARS, OR
- history of travel, within 10 days of onset of symptoms, to an area in which there are reported foci of transmission of SARS.

Transmission of SARS from normal social contact is low and no special precautions are required in most workplaces and classrooms in Australia, with the exception being health care establishments treating possible SARS cases.

The risk of contracting SARS for people currently resident in affected areas is low unless the person has been in close contact with someone already ill with SARS. People resident in such areas should take heed of local authority warnings and requirements. Those on non-essential business are advised to consider returning to Australia, where they can expect to be screened by the authorities on arrival.

Non-essential travel to affected areas should be postponed for the time being and those needing to travel should reduce the risk of exposure by avoiding close contact with ill persons. The Commonwealth Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has strongly recommended Australians consider deferring, until further notice, non-essential travel to China including Hong Kong, Singapore and Vietnam. Public health measures are in a state of flux as knowledge of SARS changes.

The following websites have up-to-date information about the SARS outbreak:

- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade at www.dfat.gov.au
- USA Centre for Disease Control at www.cdc.gov

The Commonwealth Telephone Hotline is available seven days a week from 9am to 8pm on 1800 004 599.
Director of reproductive science in the University's Faculty of Science and IT, Professor John Aitken, is an excellent collaborator. In fact, his networking talents, along with his outstanding research reputation, have seen him appointed Director of a $12 million Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence in Biotechnology and Development (CBD).

The ARC Centre brings together researchers from four universities - Newcastle, Monash, Queensland and the Australian National University - to carry out genome to phenotype research, which has been named as a national research priority area. The CBD will concentrate on the differentiation of male germ cells.

"There are two layers to our research," John explains. "Firstly, there are the fundamental science objectives - analysis of how gene expression controls the developmental fate of cells. Secondly, there are practical applications that make use of the information we gain through that research, in areas including male fertility, testicular cancer and animal sterilisation to name a few."

Following on the genomics revolution, which has seen Europe and the US lead the way in the cataloguing of plant and animal genes, John says Australia can play a role in the future by studying how genes interact as a way of understanding how cells grow and develop.

"We could pick any cell to study but we've chosen the male germ cell because it is a beautiful model for studying the developmental biology of cells," he said. "It starts off as a very primitive, primordial cell and in the course of its development makes a number of decisions which see it transform into stem cells and eventually into fully functional spermatozoa."

John says the CBD unites researchers that are amongst the best developmental biologists in the world today. It is no accident that Newcastle was chosen as the lead site.

"It is important that the University is in a regional area," he said. "We see our Centre as contributing to the growth and prosperity of the region. One of the things that drives us here is the idea of a vibrant biotechnology industry developing in the Hunter, with the University at its heart."

The Hunter already has a head start on this path with its high levels of cooperation in medical and scientific research. John, for instance, is a member of Hunter Medical Research Institute (HMRI), which represents a partnership between the University and the region's medical facilities.

"HMRI is an example of the synergy between science and medicine that exists in Newcastle," John said. "With Roger Smith, I am co-director of the Institute's Mothers and Babies Research Centre, and I am also director of reproductive science in the Faculty of Science and IT at the University. A powerful interface between science and medicine is the common point between the CBD's four partner universities and what will see them studying in an area that leads the world.

"We're all excited by the prospect of working together," John said. "As Director, it's my job to make sure all the parts speak to each other."
John says the network will attract postgraduate students keen to take advantage of the best that the four institutions have to offer, and will create students who are not only scientifically literate but are also commercially aware. The ARC funding will pay for at least two international scholars per year to visit the centre and bring ideas and techniques from around the world to Australia.

**Areas of application for the Centre’s research include:**

- Contraception — with more than 150,000 abortions performed each day, a reversible male contraceptive would be widely used;
- Domestic and feral animal control — a lucrative market exists for non-surgical sterilisation in domestic and feral animal species;
- Male reproduction — with a rising incidence of testicular cancer globally and one in 20 Australian men infertile, the germ cell research could provide clues to solving these clinical problems; and
- Gene pharming — by studying the male germ cell, the researchers hope to introduce human genes into animals to produce, for instance, herds of cows carrying high concentrations of therapeutic human proteins, such as insulin, in their milk.

The CBD is funded by the ARC and by the participating universities, with State governments set to contribute as well. The Centre has an advisory board, which includes industry representatives.

“The board members will provide us with feedback on the quality of the fundamental research in a strategic sense,” John said. “The fundamental science is the major reason for the Centre but the way we can add value to that research is through links with the end users and the development of practical outcomes.”

A spirit of cooperation — HMRI Executive Director John Rostas, Pro Vice-Chancellor for the Faculty of Science and IT Bill Hogarth and Federal Member for Newcastle Sharon Grierson discuss the Centre with Professor Aitken.
Graduation

Town planners and urban designers needed

Newcastle graduate and Land and Environment Court Commissioner Kevin Hoffman delivered the occasional address at the Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment graduation ceremony on April 16. Following is an excerpt from his address.

Amongst the programs from which graduates are emerging today there are two missing from those I see as necessary in a Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment. Those two are usually postgraduate degrees because they are usually undertaken by professionals from the disciplines listed in your Faculty.

From the point of view of the team that designs and builds and redevelops and maintains our towns and cities, those two missing programs are town planning and urban design.

They are essentially coordination roles in the team. They have certain specialist skills that they are best at…however in order to have the information needed to activate those skills, town planning depends upon the input of others, especially civil engineers, transport and traffic engineers, surveyors, environmental specialists, hydrologists, geologists, electrical and communications engineers, architects, landscape architects and these days computer specialists in satellite mapping and land analysts techniques, and construction management.

Once they have all those inputs, town planners are good at recommending what should be environmentally protected, what land uses should be allowed and where, what services and infrastructure are needed, and how to master plan an area and provide the statutory legislation to bring it into being and to control its growth.

Australia, believe or not, with our small population of about 19 million, has a greater percentage of people living in cities and towns, versus the country areas, than any other nation on earth except perhaps Singapore, Taiwan, Monaco and a few other city-states.

Our experience has shown that having good town planners, engineers and architects has not been enough. There are other dimensions to our cities that need careful management to ensure we retain the quality of life we all enjoy in Australia.

That is where urban designers have come from. They look at the social, cultural, economic, political, physical, technological and environmental systems that are essential components of our communities. Almost always, in the past, the sensitive relationships between those components have been ignored or left to look after themselves because they are too hard to understand, to regularise and to control. That is why we have seen the downturn of parts of cities and towns, and their degradation for long periods.

To resuscitate such areas successfully, and to avoid such things in the future it is necessary to explore the complexities of cities in a new way. Each city and town is different. We have to understand the networks that link all the components of these areas. We need to be able to produce deliberately designed interventions at the urban scale using a number of collaborative multi-disciplinary approaches.

The problems being experienced in Australia will be minor compared to the effects in the most populous countries where millions of persons are moving from the rural areas to the cities for work. The emerging economies of these countries, as they industrialise, are creating the movement of huge numbers of persons into the cities. It is not going to stop, and solutions to the impacts must be found.

Although those countries may not realise it yet, their need for town planners, urban designers and expert professionals such as the graduates here today, is much greater than ours, and we can contribute much to help in avoiding or minimising the consequences.

That is where you, and your membership of the team responsible for the Built Environment, come in. I am sure most of you will become involved in one way or another with town planning and urban design. Make your contributions count.

Seize the opportunities that are offered or those that come your way. Create your own opportunity where and when your professional training reveals a path forward.

Embrace your career, remember to take time for your personal life and family, let your enthusiasm for everything you do know no bounds. Do not be afraid to change course where the circumstances justify it.

And, so that you know the end of your studies at university are just the start of the knowledge you will acquire from here on, let me end with an abridged quote from Albert Einstein:

"Never regard study as a duty, but as an enviable opportunity to learn to know beauty, for your own personal joy, and to the profit of the community to which your later works belong."
Iraqi refugee finds artistic expression

When Master of Creative Arts student Niz Jabour heard that war had begun in his native Iraq, he retreated to his room to try and make sense of it all. For three weeks he sat alone — not daring to listen to the radio or watch television — and reflected on his place in the world.

“I felt it as a personal crisis,” Niz said. “It was lucky that I have studied a lot and particularly that I’ve studied theatre. I was able to ask what my role as an artist is in this crisis of self.”

Niz fled Saddam Hussein’s repressive regime in 1987, then worked in Europe in the theatre before coming to Australia, where he spent time in a refugee detention centre. He felt isolated and examined what connection he had with the people coming to Australia, where he spent time in a new community during the invasion of his land.

“I want to prove to everyone that an artist with his vision can be equal to any historical problem, and to take my feelings from the personal to humanitarian issues through the performing arts.”

Niz put aside the research project he was working on — a group-devised performance titled ‘Epic of a Refugee’ — and began to write. The resulting play, entitled ‘The Fools’, with Niz in the lead role and two other players, will be performed at the University in June.

“I have used a new way of writing to create what I call ‘montage theatre’, which is my personal technique,” Niz said. “I have written about 21 segments, varying in length from 30 seconds to four minutes, that present my response to the war, the political situation here and there, the media, history, religion and culture.”

Senior lecturer in the School of Music and Drama, Dr David Watt, who is supervising Niz, says his research is an investigation of performance and practice as research tools to answer a central research question.

“Refugees are often enjoined to assimilate to Australian culture and leave behind their native culture,” he said. “That involves doing things to the memory and identity that create a sense of displacement. The research question is how does an artist circumvent that process in what is essentially an alien culture?”

‘The Fools’ is the third in a series of plays Niz has written as part of the MCA. The first ‘No Answer Yet’, was based on his personal memories of life in an Australian refugee detention centre and was performed at the Palace Youth Centre. The second, ‘The Unfinished Show’, traced the refugee journey through the work of three performers and won Niz a local drama award, the CONDA, for best play last year.

“The Fools’, with Niz in the lead role and two other players, will be staged in the University’s Drama Theatre on June 11, 12 and 13.

Research into criminal stereotypes earns PhD

Respected artist and teacher Andrew Speirs received his PhD in Fine Art at Callaghan last month for a thesis examining visual representations of criminology over time.

Andrew began his research at the University in 1996 and traced the persistence of stereotypes of criminal deviance from the 18th century through to today’s isometric techniques. His thesis, Imaging the Criminal, was accompanied by production of multi-media works and culminated in an exhibition entitled ‘Cities of Darkness, Bodies of Light’, held in the Fine Art Gallery in June last year.

The thesis and exhibition examined visual representations of criminality through the works of physiognomists, phrenologists, anthropometrists and criminologists. It traced the way in which stereotypes of criminal deviance were produced in varied historical contexts, from the nineteenth century to the War on Terror.

“Biometrics refers to techniques such as face recognition software and iris scanning that produce digital, usually covertly received, data that is supposed to locate an individual in a group,” Andrew explained.

“What I found was that while these methods claim to be able to distinguish individuals, they are in fact reverting to stereotypes.”

Andrew is an award-winning artist, whose sculpture has been displayed in public spaces in Sydney and Canberra. He began his art education at the National Art School in 1987, before completing a Bachelor of Visual Arts at Sydney University’s College of Arts in 1991 and a Master of Art in photomedia from the University of NSW College of Fine Arts (COFA) in 1994. He has taught multimedia and photography at the Universities of Newcastle and Canberra and COFA and currently holds a research position to introduce computer visualisation into the art studios of Sydney’s College of Arts.

Andrew was supervised in his PhD by Emeritus Professor John Ramsland, Professor Anne Graham and by former Dean of Architecture Barry Maitland.
Health dinner marks anniversaries

More than 350 people celebrated the first anniversary of the restructured Faculty of Health and 25 years of the Bachelor of Medicine program being offered at the University at a dinner at Newcastle City Hall last month.

Heads of the Faculty's four schools, as well as the Directors of the University Department of Rural Health, the Family Action Centre and the Research Centre for Gender and Health, outlined the major milestones in their first year in the Faculty.

Awards were presented to staff to mark long service and outstanding contributions. Students were also presented with awards for excellent academic results.

Chaplaincy promotes togetherness

The University Chaplaincy had more visitors on the Monday that their new premises in the Hunter Building opened than on all the Mondays in the previous year in the demountable building they inhabited at the back of the Griffith Duncan Theatre.

The Chaplaincy relocated to offices alongside the Huxley Library in January. Chaplaincy Coordinator Dom Carrigan says the new premises, while not quite as large as the space provided by the demountable, was much more in keeping with the Chaplaincy ethos - to be a drop-in centre for staff and students.

“We had to get used to the noise at first,” Dom joked, “but we’re now getting what we call ‘passing trade’ so the facilities are much better.”

Chaplaincy Coordinator Dom Carrigan and Catholic Chaplain Sister Mary Gay welcome students and staff

L-R: Jack and Pat Yorgensen from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints with Chaplaincy Coordinator Dom Carrigan and Catholic Chaplain Sister Mary Gay welcome students and staff

Mrs Mary Maddison, widow of inaugural Dean of Medicine David Maddison, spoke at the dinner, on 25 years of the Bachelor of Medicine, as did Emeritus Professor Saxon White.

Dr Cathy Regan, who was a medical student in the University’s first cohort, reflected on her time in the Faculty and her son Luke, who recently graduated from the Bachelor of Medicine, presented a video compiled by a number of students, which took a humorous look at studying medicine in Newcastle.

Professor Brian English, acting for the Vice-Chancellor at the dinner, congratulated the Faculty of Health on their achievements.

Ray Kelly, CEO of the Awabakal Cooperative, welcomed guests to the land and the Awabakal dancers performed.

One thing that often surprises visitors to the Chaplaincy is the harmonious mixing of a range of different religious traditions. There are seven different Christian groups represented within the Chaplaincy, including Anglican, Catholic, Baptist, Presbyterian, Seventh-Day Adventist, Uniting Church and the Church of Latter Day Saints.

“The University Chaplaincy is regarded nationally as a group that gets on well with each other,” he said. “We have developed a cohesion between us that is almost unique amongst Australian universities.”

The Chaplaincy hold monthly meetings as well as an in-service at the Ourimbah Campus each semester, which attracts chaplains from other NSW universities. All the chaplains are volunteers and work on a roster to make sure the Chaplaincy is open between 10am and 2pm each day. Catholic Eucharist is offered on Wednesdays and Sundays.

Baptist Chaplain Ron Gibbins says the cooperative nature of the University’s chaplains reflects the church community in Newcastle. Ron was instrumental in inaugurating the Heads of Churches, which sees the city’s religious leaders meet once a month to work together.

“The Chaplaincy operates within the wider church context,” he said. “Newcastle is more cooperative between the various churches than practically anywhere else.”

The Chaplaincy welcomes staff and students from all backgrounds and nationalities. Drop in to the new premises, phone 4921 5571 or visit www.newcastle.edu.au/services/ours/stuserv/chaplain/chaphp.htm
Mayfield – the Toorak of Newcastle?

Researchers at the University's Cultural Industries and Practices Research Centre (CIPS) uncovered some fascinating facts about one of Newcastle's oldest suburbs while developing two heritage walks to encourage greater awareness of Mayfield.

Did you know, for instance, that Mayfield was once one of Newcastle's most desirable and fashionable addresses? Or that there was once a sandy beach and popular picnic spot called Shelley Beach in TOURLE STREET, Mayfield?

These and other little known historical facts are included in the heritage walk brochures prepared by CIPS for Newcastle City Council and the Mayfield Main Street Committee. In a collaborative project that took nine months to complete, researchers unearthed the former industrial suburb's hidden past to produce the brochures, which guide visitors on historical walks.

CIPS researcher and lecturer in leisure and tourism studies in the School of Social Sciences Kevin Markwell said the project began with a thorough analysis of historical archives on Mayfield, including the contents of a website constructed and maintained by Giovanni di Gravio from the University's Archives and Rare Books section.

"We also tapped into an oral history project being conducted by communications students from the University, who were interviewing older residents from Mayfield," he said, "and also held community meetings, where we invited local people to come along and share their stories of living in Mayfield."

While Mayfield was home to some of Newcastle's wealthiest and most influential families from the 1870s until the arrival of the BHP steelworks in 1913, the researchers don't just focus on this period in the suburb's history. They also tell the stories of the steelworkers and their families – their homes, churches, schools, shops and recreation areas.

"Most of the work was in pulling together the historical material," Kevin explained. "We then selected elements in the landscape of today's Mayfield and wove them together into two coherent narratives that translate into walking trails."

The project, which was assisted by a collaborative research grant from the University, has generated a lot of interest for CIPS both within and outside the Hunter region. The Centre worked with Fine Arts student Charles Jordan to encourage local school children to interpret the historical facts they uncovered into paintings and artworks. They have also won a grant to work with a number of artists to create a piece of public art to stand in Bull Street, that will allow people to see aspects of Mayfield's history in three dimensions.

The walking trail brochures – 'Mayfield, Living the Life' and 'Mayfield, the Toorak of Newcastle' – were launched in a ceremony held in the main street during Heritage Week in April, with the 200-strong crowd far exceeding the organiser's expectations.

Futures first collaboration

The University has this year worked closely with the Hunter Institute of TAFE to stage a series of 'Futures First – Learning Pathways for School Students' seminars. The seminars aim to help high school principals, careers advisers and year advisers to guide thousands of Hunter and Central Coast students towards the available learning pathways for future studies.

The seminars, held in May, were jointly conducted by the University and TAFE at five locations: Upper Hunter, Lower Hunter, Lake Macquarie, Newcastle and Central Coast. Manager for Student Recruitment activities at the University Susan Eade said that relevant staff from all high schools in the Hunter and Central Coast regions were invited to the seminars.

"We are happy to cooperate with TAFE to offer current information on educational options. The Futures First seminars add to the suite of similar events offered by the University to the school community and it is another example of the University's strong commitment to the community."

Speakers from the University and from TAFE gave presentations on application processes, dates and information to help guide prospective students to web-based program and course information. Participants in the seminars were able to raise issues regarding admission and credit transfer between the two institutions.
Prize for rewriting history in Soviet Russia

Glasgow University Professor Stephen White, a past president of BASEES, praised the book for the way in which it used original archival and oral sources to cast light on how the revisionist historians’ battle for the Soviet past in the 1960s paved the way for the dramatic upheaval in Soviet historical writing which accompanied perestroika under Gorbachev in the 1980s.

Dr Markwick says the book is based on a substantially revised version of his doctoral thesis, for which the initial research began in 1990.

"I returned twice to Russia, once in 1995 and again in early 1998, to seek additional material for the book," he said. "I was privileged to meet these historians, many of whom have since died, who not only fought for historical truth in the best traditions of the Russian intelligentsia but also sought the reform of the Soviet Union, not its destruction." 

Ironically, however, it was the collapse of the Soviet Union that gave Roger unprecedented access to hitherto hidden sources.

"Researching and writing this book was some of the most exciting and exciting scholarly work I have ever done. If I have done nothing else, I have told the story of these courageous and principled historians," he said.

Negotiations are under way for Roger’s book to be translated into Russian.

Identifying pollutant sources in Port Stephens

A research project into the health of the Tilligerry estuary has found possible catchment sources that contribute to faecal contamination.

The project into ‘On-site Treatment System Failure and Shellfish Contamination in Port Stephens’ is being carried out by the School of Environmental and Life Sciences in the Faculty of Science and IT, and was funded by the NSW Department of Local Government SepticSafe Program. The project tracked chemical and microbial indicators in faecal material from animal and human sources as they move through the catchment to the estuary.

In particular, the study examined whether there was a potential link between the performance of individual septic systems in the Tilligerry area and whether the contaminants from these systems could reach surface and groundwaters, and possibly lead to water quality impacts on estuarine oyster growing waters.

Phillip Geary, Senior Lecturer in the School and Project Coordinator said the research evaluated different chemical and biological tracers to ascertain which materials would be most suitable in determining if links existed between septic disposal fields, drainage channels, waterways, and oyster growing waters.

"We then collected faecal waste samples for chemical and biological analysis from different locations, and attempted to trace where the waste was going using the selected indicators," he said.

"We were particularly interested in establishing whether waste of human origin had the potential to reach the estuary."

Preliminary results from the work suggest that it is possible for pathogenic microorganisms in the estuary to be derived from individual on-site septic systems (along with waste from other sources such as agriculture) under specific conditions.

"Of concern is that enteric viruses (if present) in the human waste could also be transported to the estuary, particularly during periods of heavy rainfall, and given their published survival times, could potentially be present in estuarine waters used for aquaculture," Phillip said. "Although on-site septic systems are not potentially a major source of contaminants relative to agricultural sources, their presence in the estuary, from the work undertaken, confirms that it is possible."

The researchers concluded that while the potential risk level to human health is regarded as very low, the findings suggest there is a need to better manage land use activities in catchments, particularly where estuarine waters are used for aquaculture.
Inaugural Jennie Thomas Travelling Art Scholarships presented

Fine arts students Linsey Gosper and Alexia Sinclair will travel overseas to further their art thanks to the generosity of Mrs Jennie Thomas.

Linsey and Alexia are the inaugural winners of the Jennie Thomas Travelling Art Scholarship, which funds artists to travel in the interests of art and art history. During a presentation ceremony to award the scholarships, held in the Fine Art Gallery last month, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Brian English welcomed Mrs Thomas' generous donation.

"Jennie Thomas attended Teacher's College in Newcastle in the 1950s and subsequently met and married her husband Phil, known as Emet, who was then studying chemistry at Tighes Hill," he said. "Jennie has done a lot of work in memory of her late husband. She has wisely and generously decided to endow scholarships and fund a number of important research programs in the areas that interested them while she is still alive so that she can meet the researchers and artists and see their careers develop."

Mrs Thomas has endowed scholarships in music (Church music), health and the environment in memory of Philip, who was an industrial chemistry graduate of the University.

"These were areas in which she had a shared interest with her late husband," Brian said, "but the real love of her life is art and she readily agreed to a suggestion from staff that the art scholarship be named after her."

While Mrs Thomas, who lives in Canberra, was ill and unable to attend the presentation ceremony, she has met both of the artists and attended their exhibitions. She agreed to fund two scholarships in this inaugural year, as she could not choose between the two applicants.

Alexia Sinclair, who will use her scholarship to study photographic portraiture in New York, is the third generation of female artists in her family. She helps her parents run the Courthouse Restaurant in Morpeth in the Hunter Valley. Alexia says Mrs Thomas is a very warm and friendly lady with an incredible amount of admiration for artists.

"She remembered every one of the pieces I showed in my exhibition and was able to say why she loved each one and to recognise where my motivation for them came from," Alexia said. "She makes you feel special."

Linsey Gosper, who grew up in Lismore, studied communications at the University, majoring in photography, before completing her Fine Arts honours. She plans to use her scholarship to pursue her interest in fashion photography in London.

"I'm very interested in exploring issues that face women in society today, particularly in alternate body images than those portrayed by the fashion industry," she said. "There are a lot of cool designers around my age working in London now whose work is more contemporary and realistic and I'd love to get involved with photographing that."

The $2,500 Travelling Scholarships will allow Linsey and Alexia to see and experience internationally recognised art and to pursue their respective artistic interests. They hope to stage a joint exhibition at the University next year to showcase what they achieve on their travels.

Apologies

Chasing captions is the bane of busy editors. Apologies to UNISS graduate David Williams (right), whose name appeared under a photograph of David Scalley, one of the first graduates in the new Bachelor of Engineering (Telecommunications), in the last issue of Uninews.

Apologies also to staff members who received 25 year medals last year and felt slighted because they were not individually named in the photograph (left) that appeared in the February 2003 issue.

Thanks to staff from Human Resource Services for putting names to faces for the caption.
Tamworth talent on show

Six graduating students who studied visual arts through the University's Tamworth campus came together to create the 'Diversities' exhibition held at the Watt Space Gallery last month.

Although the artists displayed widely varying styles in the exhibition, they share the common bond of studying through the School of Fine Art's unique arrangements with Tamworth TAFE college.

The six artists are the third group to graduate from the program, with two of the students – Pam Brown and Rosemary Reynolds – undertaking Honours at the University this year.

Pam was studying fine art and photography at the Tamworth TAFE when they arranged for her class to attend the final year exhibition of the first cohort of University students from Tamworth. As a single mother of two children, she appreciated the value of being able to study towards her degree in her home town.

"I didn't need any encouragement to enroll," she said. "I realised that it was the only way I was ever going to get a degree. It was great that our lecturer, Lili Ann Berg, came to the studio once a week and for us to come to Newcastle and interact with other students every month. I've been amazed at how far I've come. I'm doing things I've never experienced before and living a surreal sort of life."

Another of the students, Heather Cohen, a commercial artist from Glen Innes said she had completed some studies at Southern Cross University's Lismore campus but was unable to continue.

"Tamworth is miles from anywhere and I had stopped studying for two years because I didn't know how I was going to be able to finish," Heather said. "It is fantastic for us to be able to do tertiary studies in Tamworth."

The graduating students were all given advanced standing in their University studies in recognition of their TAFE (and in Heather's case university) qualifications.

The Diversities exhibition included works in oils, collage, mixed media and drawing, indicating the capacity and energy present in the Tamworth region. It was opened by Acting Head of the School of Fine Art Miranda Lawry and artist and teacher Lili Ann Berg.

Building a better future in education

Senior Lecturer in Construction Management and Deputy Head of the School of Architecture and Built Environment Willy Sher has been honoured by the Australian Institute of Building for his contribution to the future of education in the building sector.

Willy has been awarded a Certificate of Appreciation from the Australian Institute of Building (AIB) and a Certificate of Recognition from the Department of Fair Trading.

President of the AIB's NSW Chapter Robert Whittaker said the awards recognise Willy Sher's instrumental role in the piloting of the AIB's Log Book scheme, enabling students to gain accreditation for their undergraduate experience when applying for a license as a builder or consultant.

"The Log Book scheme greatly increases the transparency and accountability in the licensing process for building contractors and consultants," he said.

The AIB has been accrediting building degree programs throughout Australia for over 50 years, including the University's Bachelor of Construction Management (Building).

The Bachelor of Construction Management (Building) is a core undergraduate program designed to prepare students for a professional career in the construction industry. The qualification is internationally recognised and highly portable because of reciprocal arrangements with professional institutions world wide.

Previously, work experience obtained by building students needed to be documented as a stand-alone exercise.

"We have now enabled them to use the same evidence for several different functions including gaining a builder's or consultant's license," Willy explains. "The Log Book scheme directly benefits our building students and graduates, providing them with a head start in gaining a license."

Willy said the awards were a great acknowledgment of the commitment the University has made to increasing career opportunities for Newcastle graduates and to nurturing the future of the building industry.
### Alumni Club offers benefits

The University is making a significant investment in the future of its alumni program with the introduction this year of an Alumni Club.

This year’s graduates will receive a year’s complimentary membership of the Club, which provides them with access to an entertainment package worth $50.

Manager of Alumni and Community Services Kristen Keegan says the membership gift, worth more than $60,000 this year, is an innovative way of introducing new graduates to the Club.

“The Alumni Club represents a new approach to alumni by the University,” she said. “The booklet outlining the entertainment benefits is a way to give something back to graduates and provides us with a launching pad to offer them networking and mentoring opportunities.”

Membership is open to all current students, graduates, past and present staff, University Council members, donors, supporters, friends and family for an annual fee of $49.95. In conjunction with On-Line Entertainment, the Alumni Club provides members with access to an enormous range of offers from restaurants, holiday destinations and a host of other attractions throughout Australia and New Zealand. To view the offers visit www.onlineentertainment.com.au/uninew.

Kristen says the University has more than 70,000 graduates on its database but that it is hard to engage with them once they have left the University. She says the Alumni Club benefits booklet is the tip of the iceberg in plans to build a strong alumni network.

“Australia doesn’t have the culture of legacy that exists in universities in the US and UK and asking graduates to contribute funds can alienate them,” she said. “The entertainment booklet concept provides a mutual benefit and the funds raised can feed back into alumni activities.”

There are plans to introduce additional benefits for Alumni Club members including a lifelong email address and access to e-newsletters connecting members with a networking group in their interest area. Members of the Club can choose to receive invitations to alumni events including business networking activities, professional development and mentoring, seminars and lectures, and social events such as cocktail parties, diners and reunions.

To see what benefits are available to Alumni Club members visit the website at www.newcastle.edu.au/alumni/aboutus/alumni-club.html (or via the link on the University's home page), call 4921 6561 or email alumni@newcastle.edu.au

### Thoughts on the passing of a DVC: Doug Huxley

by Terry Lovat, Pro Vice-Chancellor for the Faculty of Education and Arts

I described Doug Huxley at his funeral celebration as a 'prophet', which is probably the last thing he would want to be remembered by, especially if he had thought it might have religious connotations.

As a proud descendant of the 19th century naturalist who shared his name, this would not do. Nonetheless, Doug stands in my mind as somewhat prophetic because of his persistent knack of 'reading' what was in the wind. Even when it seemed he was quite wrong, he so often ended up being right. For example, he had a rather singular view, provided to Academic Senate in the very early 1990s, that the University needed an oddity called a 'strategic plan', with even more odd attachments called 'performance indicators'. As if that wasn't sufficient, he produced documents proposing that funding be tied to effort and was adamant (in his own phlegmatic way) that the articulation of mission and vision statements was an urgent task for the University to undertake.

One could say the applause for all this was not resounding but one would not have known it from Doug's demeanor. In the way of prophets, it was as though he just 'knew' he was right, whatever the reaction and no matter how long it might take. As things transpired, of course, it didn't take long at all!

His 'reading the wind' was evident in his attitude to all that happened in higher education throughout the late 1980s. As one with a keen social conscience, he was committed fully to that ten-fold expansion in post-school access that characterised the 20 years up to that time, and was a proud defender of the CAE phenomenon that he saw as instrumental in making such a sea change possible. In the last year or so of the life of the then Hunter Institute of Higher Education, he was quite open in stating his personal preference that things might have stayed as they were. At the same time, it was as though he knew that the form of higher education that had been his vehicle had to now take its charter into a new environment. He was always a model of gracious acceptance of the larger forces of life, whether he personally liked them or not. As a consequence, he passed without a murmur from being Principal of the Institute to being Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Planning) of the new University where his prophetic ways continued.

It's probably the case that his contribution to the University and to higher education generally is, to this point in time, a little under-celebrated. This, of course, is precisely the way he would want it. Nonetheless, there is a project in waiting which will one day see someone gather the strands of the voluminous documents on which he was always working. These, I have no doubt, will illustrate what a remarkably shrewd and positive contributor he was to higher education in the Hunter and, in his own arcane way, to all that our University has become in the past decade or so. Vale Doug!
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