- Kim Beazley delivers John Turner Memorial History Lecture  p10
- Grants advance energy efficient housing research  p5
- Virgin births and teenage pregnancy research  p6
- NUbots take on the world  p20
Plagiarism policy reinforced

The University has been under close scrutiny over the past six months on the issue of plagiarism. We have suffered a great deal of criticism in the national media in recent weeks over allegations that we have mishandled an investigation of alleged plagiarism within the university.

I have taken a great deal of interest and responsibility for these matters, as I see them of major importance and significance to us. I want to assure you that I have great faith and belief that we are a university of the highest educational standards.

Plagiarism devalues "the quality of learning, both for the individual and for others enrolled in the course. The University imposes strict penalties on students who are found to contravene the University plagiarism policy. Good scholarship necessarily requires building on and incorporating the work of others. This use must be appropriately acknowledged."

The policy statement continues: "To avoid plagiarism, it is important to understand how to attribute the work and ideas you use to their proper source. The acknowledgement of the contributions of others is not solely a matter of honesty. It also shows the extent to which the student has consulted appropriate references and source materials during preparation of their work."

These are the foundation principles for our plagiarism policy and also represent the building blocks in determining the responsibilities for the university, staff members and students. I would urge all staff members and students to read, understand and apply the plagiarism policy in their regular work of teaching, assessing and supervising students. Brochures are being prepared to provide advice about the nature of plagiarism, and the responsibilities of staff and students in detecting, preventing and avoiding plagiarism. These will be distributed widely and promulgated using our web site. I am confident that the increased attention on our policy and practices in the detection and prevention of plagiarism will strengthen the teaching and learning practices of the university overall, as well as its resolve to achieve best practice in this area.

To assist this process, the University has joined the CAVAL Plagiarism Detection Consortium. CAVAL will provide support services and training for Turnitin, the plagiarism detection software recently adopted by all higher education institutions in the UK, as well as many other institutions internationally and in Australia. Our membership of the Consortium will facilitate use of CAVAL helpdesk, project consultancy and training support across the university. Turnitin will accompany other initiatives currently being developed by the university to enable staff and students to be proactive and responsible in their management of information ethics.

May I thank all of those who have expressed their support for the university in its hour of media ‘focus’ and ask you to continue that strong support as well as a firm commitment to retaining our good name and reputation for excellence in higher education, research, research training and community service.

Roger S Holmes
Vice-Chancellor and President

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Killing them softly with welfare benefits

Australians who receive welfare benefits should be compelled to give something in return, Federal Minister for Family and Community Services, Senator Amanda Vanstone, told an audience at a lecture delivered as part of the Centre of Full Employment and Equity's Public Policy series.

Senator Vanstone, who is also Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women, said reciprocity must be a key feature of Australia's welfare system, which should increasingly incorporate mutual obligation.

"Mutual obligation recognises that need should not be looked at only in terms of dollars and cents. It also recognises that it is wrong of Government to satisfy need only with welfare payments," she said.

"Our needs are greater than just money. They run to needing a sense of being part of the community, being praised for your efforts, and being satisfied for your contributions. But this does not come from simply sitting on your hands doing nothing."

Passive welfare, where people are provided with benefits for no return, has had a "devastating" effect in Indigenous communities, where people's initiative and will to work had been "sapped away", Senator Vanstone said.

"We need to look past the days of dependence, to a future where individuals can be independent through work and giving back to the community that has previously supported them."

Senator Vanstone said the Howard Government had increased expenditure on income support from $33.9billion in 1995-96 to $53.7billion in 2002-03 and that support for sole parents had also grown significantly over the last 10 years. The Government is trying to re-design and simplify the welfare system to support people when they genuinely need it and help them re-enter the workforce when they are able to, she said.

"Asking people to reciprocate in return for a welfare dollar should not be seen as a negative but a very real positive. It recognises what they can do. By asking for nothing, by recognising no value in welfare reciprocity we are killing them softly."

Senator Vanstone answered questions from the audience of University staff and students, and members of the public. One questions reflected concerns that mutual obligation is simply a compliance mechanism that does not change the problem of welfare recipients. Another raised the issue that integrity can only be relevant if there are jobs for welfare recipients to access and must therefore include the government's responsibility to support job creation measures. The ability of the government's policies to address high youth unemployment, such as exists in the Hunter, was questioned.

Senator Vanstone delivered her lecture, entitled 'Passive Welfare - Killing Them Softly', at University House in July. CoffEE's Public Policy Lectures, supported by the School of Policy, are being held regularly throughout 2003.

Choisir trainer shares good fortune

First Chance, the charity that supports the early intervention programs offered by the University's Special Education Centre, has received a boost to its fundraising efforts with a unique donation from Newcastle racing identity Paul Perry.

Mr Perry shot to international prominence in racing circles when the champion colt he owned and trained, Choisir, recently won Ascot's prestigious King's Stand Stakes and Golden Jubilee Stakes. He is sharing his good fortune with First Chance by presenting them with a cheque and a framed, autographed photograph of Choisir during one of the Ascot wins.

Special Education Centre Director Bob Conway said it is hoped that the one-off photograph of Choisir in full flight will be auctioned at a Newcastle Jockey Club dinner attended by Paul Perry and other people involved in the racing industry.

"His generosity is fantastic," Bob said. "He's given us a picture that will not be released in Australia and has agreed to take part in a fundraising dinner."

Bob said Mr Perry became involved with First Chance through a friend, whose child attends the Centre's early intervention programs. First Chance is a registered charity that supports the Centre's programs, which aims to help children with special needs from birth to school entry.

"Fundraising is essential to maintain the diversity of programs offered, and to help purchase specialist equipment" Bob said. "There are many children who are in need of early intervention services but the costs of assisting them cannot be met by our limited government funding."

Details of the proposed NJC dinner, when the Choisir photograph will be auctioned, will be advised. For information contact the Special Education Centre on 4921 6275 or email special-ed@newcastle.edu.au
Make ‘your voice’ heard

Message from the Vice-Chancellor

I am pleased to announce that a University wide, Staff Climate Survey will be conducted in September. The ‘your voice’ survey will give staff and conjoints a chance to voice their opinions about how well the University, its faculties, schools, divisions and portfolios are functioning. It is an essential tool in assessing and improving the University’s work environment, its planning processes and management practices.

‘Your voice’ forms part of an ongoing research program called the Voice Project, headed by Dr Peter Langford of Macquarie University. The project has been in operation for three years and the survey has been conducted in over 250 organisations including at least one other Australian university.

The survey will help us assess how the University is performing and provide a basis for developing initiatives and changing practices. It will be conducted every two years to monitor the effect of our actions and to constantly reassess our performance and priorities.

Your participation in the survey is essential to inform future actions. We need you to answer the questionnaire during the two-week survey period in mid September. The survey will be conducted online, with paper based surveys available to staff who cannot access the intranet. I would ask you to show your support of this initiative by participating in the survey and encouraging others to take part. Completing the survey is an integral part of each staff member’s work and managers/supervisors are to ensure all staff have sufficient work time to participate.

I am keen to hear your feedback, provide you with the survey results and act on the issues identified in it. The results will be analysed externally and reported at group level [to School or Portfolio as appropriate]. Reports will be available to staff and forums will be run across the University and within each faculty to communicate and acknowledge the results.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor Brian English, will conduct University wide forums at Callaghan and Ourimbah campuses. Pro-vice chancellors will conduct forums on the results for their faculty by the end of the year and outline actions to be taken in respect of the issues identified. The results of the survey will be reported by me to Council and will also be published on the University’s intranet.

I encourage you to attend at least one forum and take the time to view the results of the survey, at least for your group. You have my guarantee that at no time will any individual, or any individual’s responses, be identified. Your responses, including those to open-ended questions, are completely confidential. In addition, any free text responses that may contain information that identifies the respondent will be altered by those at the Voice Project to protect identity without removing the issue of concern.

The survey will only be meaningful if you participate, so I hope you will log on and tell me what you think.

For further information, please feel free to contact anyone in Human Resource Services including Project Manager Louise Metcalf on 4921 8633 or email Louise.Metcalf@newcastle.edu.au

2003 Human Rights/Social Justice Lecture

Professor Lowitja O’Donoghue will present “Walking an ethical fault line: Where is Australia headed?”, as the topic for the 2003 Human Rights/Social Justice Lecture to be held in the Griffith Duncan Theatre on September 4.

Professor O’Donoghue is one of Australia’s most revered women. A member of the Yankunjtjara peoples of Central Australia, she has dedicated her life to the welfare of Aboriginal people and in recent times to seeking justice for refugees and asylum seekers.

“Her contribution to Australian public life, especially in Aboriginal health and reconciliation, has been unparalleled”

In 1975 she became the first Aboriginal person to be promoted to the role of Regional Director in the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. Between 1990 and 1996, she was the Inaugural Chairperson of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC). She currently chairs the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal and Tropical Health, is a trustee of the Rio Tinto Aboriginal Foundation and a visiting Professorial Fellow at Flinders University. She is patron of a number of health, welfare and social justice organisations including, most recently, Australians for Just Refugee Programs.

The Adelaide Festival of Ideas for 2003 was dedicated to her life’s work. An online festival tribute says: “This Festival wishes particularly to honour the quality of Lowitja O’Donoghue’s contribution to policy and debate, for her people and the nation as a whole. Throughout her public life she has struggled for justice and opportunity, she has fought to build healthy and stable communities, and she has confronted European Australians with the crimes done in their name.” www.adelaidefestival.org.au/ideas/2003/index.asp

Professor O’Donoghue was made a Member of the Order of Australia in 1997, and a Companion of the Order of Australia in 1999. She was Australian of the Year in 1984, and named as a National Living Treasure in 1998. She has been a lifetime activist on behalf of her people and a passionate advocate for justice. Enquiries to the Equity and Diversity Unit by email to equityanddiversity@newcastle.edu.au or by phoning 4921 6547.
Grants advance energy efficient housing research

The Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment has been awarded two Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Grants in excess of $350,000.

Professor Adrian Page, Pro Vice-Chancellor for the Faculty, says the grants will advance research into energy efficient housing for the future, and enhance the Faculty’s strong focus on environmental issues.

"With the increased emphasis on energy conservation and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, the energy efficiency of housing is coming under increasing scrutiny," he said.

"The School of Engineering and the School of Architecture and Built Environment have combined forces to critically examine the thermal performance of housing and, in particular, the accuracy of the current energy efficiency 'star' rating system."

Researchers from the School of Engineering, Professor Adrian Page, Dr Behdad Moghtaderi and Dr Heber Sugo, and their partner organisation, the Clay Brick and Paver Institute, are researching the thermal performance of masonry under Australian climatic conditions.

"Masonry housing in Australia is typically of brick veneer or cavity brick construction, with little or no attention paid to the thermal performance," Professor Page said. "The current thermal modelling approach is often based on unverified assumptions."

The researchers will carry out laboratory tests on walls under varying temperature conditions and make field observations on the performance of two masonry test buildings constructed on campus - one brick veneer and one cavity brick. The results will be used to refine existing wall designs and develop energy efficient masonry wall systems, ideal for the Australian climate.

Researchers from the School of Architecture and Built Environment, Professor Michael Ostwald, Conjoint Professor Lindsay Johnston and Glen Dennison, in partnership with BHP Billiton Technology, are focusing on the energy efficiency of housing in remote Australian communities.

"Services have not been optimised to minimise greenhouse gas emissions, water consumption and solid waste," he said. "Our research program will address these environmental issues by using the latest computer software package, TAS (Thermal Analysis Software), to design and test an integrated, low impact or autonomous transportable house."

The researchers hope the results will ultimately benefit remote defence sites, small rural townships and Indigenous communities, as well as offering potential for international export.

Professor Page says the Linkage Grants enable the University to develop strong partnerships with industry and combine the expertise within its schools.

"Allied research that encourages cross-disciplinary cooperation between schools will further the Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment’s reputation for research excellence," he said.

Stone book keeps staff guessing

A stone book donated to the University is keeping staff guessing as to its origin and purpose.

The book, which has been donated to Archives, Rare Books and Special Collections in the Auchmuty Library, is approximately 8.5cms by 7cms by 2.5cams and carved from medium grain sandstone.

Archives Officer Gionni Di Gravio said the stone book was donated by staff member Robert Stephens, who offered it after viewing a collection of ancient artefacts in the library.

"At this stage we are not sure what the book’s original purpose was," Gionni said. "Mr Stephens tells us that the artefact had been passed down from his grandfather to his father and on to him. His understanding was that prior to the age of printing, when books were rare, these stone books were carried by people to church."

The archive staff contacted galleries and museums and searched the Internet for clues to the book’s purpose.

"It could have been a stone missal that acted as a substitute for a bible," Gionni explained. "Or, it may have been a memorial for the dead. Whatever its original purpose was, this stone book has us intrigued and is a welcome addition to our special collection," Gionni said.
Virgin births and teenage pregnancy

Women who have babies in their teens are likely to have poorer physical and mental health than other young women, according to research undertaken by the University's Centre for Gender and Health.

Delivering a seminar on her findings on teenage pregnancy in August, Centre researcher and Project Manager for the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health (WHa), Dr Penny Warner-Smith, said that although teenage mothers buck the trend in Australia, where the average age for first birth is in the late 20s, there is an estimated 20 percent of Australian adolescent girls who will have been pregnant by the age of 20.

"Negative implications for teenage parents and their children can include poor educational achievement, living in poverty, and poor developmental outcomes," Penny said. "The data shows that young Indigenous women make up 10 to 20 percent of pregnancies in women aged 15 to 19 in NSW."

Indigenous women were also more likely to become pregnant at a younger age. There is a striking contrast between teenage mothers and other young women in their educational qualifications.

"Whereas 40 percent of all the young women had a degree, this was true of only 10 percent of the teenage mothers," Penny said. "The literature tells us that women who have some time out of the workforce before they have established themselves will find it very hard to ever catch up."

One of the more unusual findings of Penny's research was the young women who had apparently had virgin births. Of those who answered 'not applicable' to the question about age at first intercourse, roughly five percent had a baby. Penny offered a couple of hypotheses for the phenomenon.

"We know that some women who have been raped do not define rape as having intercourse. It may also be that some of our respondents did not understand the term sexual intercourse."

Another surprising revelation was that abortions were quite common among young women despite apparently widespread availability of safe contraception. Penny said the WHa data on terminations was 'particularly important' as it was not available from any other source.

Penny presented her findings at a recent roundtable on teenage pregnancy held by the NSW Department for Women. A range of strategies were discussed to try and improve access to appropriate health care and information to young women and to retain young mothers in education.

"Young women must be fully informed about the options available to them and those who wish to have children young must be given significantly more support than exists at the moment," she said.

The University's Centre for Gender and Health carries out research based on the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health. This 20-year study, that began in 1996, involves triennial postal surveys of 40,000 Australian women. The researchers use the WHa data for a range of studies into the health and wellbeing of women. The women surveyed were chosen from a random sampling of Medicare data and they are stratified by age and geographical location. The study is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing. If you would like to find out more about WHa or the research arising from it, visit the website at www.newcastle.edu.au/centre/wha/

Penny delivered her seminar, entitled 'Virgin births and other information about teenage pregnancies: data from the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health', as part of a series of research updates held on the second Tuesday of each month in the David Maddison building. For information call the Centre for Gender and Health on 4923 6872.

Salary Packaging

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

Contact Eric Burns, Authorised Representative of Associated Planners, on (02) 4942 1455.
More abilities than disabilities

Third year Social Science student Heidi Forrest took her passion for disability advocacy and human rights to an international stage when she addressed the United Nations in New York in June.

Heidi, who is President of national disability advocacy organisation, People with Disability Australia Inc (PWD), presented two interventions at a UN meeting held to consider developing a Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

"I made two statements on behalf of my organisation," she said. "The first reinforced the need for a UN Convention that goes beyond merely addressing discrimination to provide for intervention and positive support, especially in developing countries. The second brought forth some of the issues that we believe are often overlooked, such as people with HIV/AIDS around the world."

It was as a student at Kurri Kurri High School, when a cerebral aneurism at the age of 12 left her paralysed, that Heidi first developed an interest in disability advocacy.

"Even though I had a disability, I didn't know it and when they said I would need to go to a special school, I refused. I was supported by some wonderful people, including my parents and friends, who didn't treat me as though I had a disability."

It was then Heidi began to realise that a disability is a social construct. She even considers herself lucky to have grown up with special needs.

"I've had a lot of wonderful experiences that I wouldn't have had otherwise," she said. "I have more abilities than disabilities."

Despite her positive attitude, Heidi was discouraged from enrolling in university as she would have liked when she left school in the 1980s. She began doing voluntary work for PWD, then a NSW-based self-help group, and went on to study Social Welfare at TAFE. She returned to the Hunter Valley when she married and had a son and daughter.

"When the kids went to school, I started doing the Open Foundation Course, which was one of the best things I have ever done," she said. "I began my degree in 2001 and was a full-time student up until last year but when I became President of the disability organisation in March this year, something had to go so I am now studying part-time."

As well as attending the UN congress, Heidi also went to Canberra in April to a hearing in front of the full bench of the High Court, in which PWD played a legal role in a discrimination case. She is majoring in politics to help her understand the mechanisms so she can be a more effective advocate.

"I've learned to look at international issues. The UN Disabilities Convention is a really important process but a lot of people in Australia don't understand what went on there, so I hope to be able to address that with my research and writing in an Honours year."

Heidi is grateful that she is able to be a part of mainstream University life at Newcastle. She said the facilities of the Adaptive Technology Centre in the Auchmuty Library are helping her to gain her degree.

"What I want for people with disabilities everywhere is that they are totally incorporated into all aspects of society," Heidi said. "Like the women's movement, we oppose marginalisation or segregation and want people with disabilities to be involved in every field."

Rural Mental Health Centre launches website

Rural and remote communities in NSW will have access to the latest information, education materials and research on mental health thanks to a new website. The NSW Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health (CRRMH) launched its website, www.crrmh.com.au, last month.

The CRRMH is a major rural initiative of the University's Faculty of Health and NSW Health. The Centre, which began operation in January 2001 in Orange in the central west of NSW, aims to bring quality education and research programs to all rural areas of NSW.

CRRMH Director, Professor Sadanand Rajkumar says that the Centre is developed on the idea that efficient and effective mental health services can only exist in rural and remote communities if quality educational and research activities are brought to those areas.

"Our new website provides rural and remote communities with the latest information on education and research, library services and conference facilities," he said.

Professor Rajkumar believes that the standards of mental health care for the rural community will be improved by the Centre's work in facilitating the development of a broad range of skills in rural and remotely based mental health staff.

Further information on the Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health is available from http://www.crrmh.com.au
Art in living spaces and in the everyday

Professor Anne Graham, Acting Head of the School of Humanities at the Ourimbah campus, believes that art has the capacity to uplift people. If her own artistic ability and output are any indication of her belief, then she has enriched the lives of many people.

Anne was previously Head of the School of Fine Art and Deputy Executive Dean at the University's Callaghan campus and prior to that Head of the School of Fine Art at the University of Western Sydney. She has a wealth of experience in the administration of art and its practice, and has seen the pursuit of artistic education from many different angles. One of these was as Senior Education Officer for the Department of Corrective Services, where for five years she employed teachers and organised programs for inmates who wanted to develop artistic skills. It was a tough environment, she says, but where the education facilities were much appreciated by the inmates, many of whom were keen students.

A graduate of the Manchester College of Art and the Royal College of Art in London, Anne has pursued an artistic career in sculpture and installation art. As a practising artist she has worked on many public projects throughout the world as well as in Australia. She often chooses not to work within a gallery context, but rather in installations and interpretations in public areas. One of these was as Senior Education Officer for the Department of Corrective Services, where for five years she employed teachers and organised programs for inmates who wanted to develop artistic skills. It was a tough environment, she says, but where the education facilities were much appreciated by the inmates, many of whom were keen students.

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Anne is currently searching out ways to add to the artistic and cultural life of the Central Coast.

"It's such an extraordinary environment and perfect for artists to connect with other areas. I can already see the enormous potential for people to be uplifted."

"We cooked food and the smell of cooking and kerosene seemed to act like a magnet to local inhabitants. The smell operated as a trigger for memories. This was what I was aiming for, as embedded within the substance of material culture, social memories can as easily be awakened by a taste, touch, sound or smell as by an image. Memories of early experience of space are always with us and can emerge unbidden, stimulated by sensory perception, embedded within the substance of material culture."

In another project, Anne set up a temporary restaurant in the Newcastle Region Art Gallery, where various people cooked lunch each day and in turn, she created an artistic representation of their culinary creation the next day.

"As each day's lunch was served, an installation representing the previous day's menu was already on view. It was an artistic challenge as I had to produce the artwork within 24 hours. It was also a lot of fun and an enjoyable activity over the Christmas period."

With a creative mind always looking for new ideas and inspirations, and a passion for nurturing that drive in others, Anne has just returned from a three-week trip to Japan. She was accompanied by 16 fine art students and says the trip was a great way to experience and learn from another culture.

Anne tried to describe the essence of her philosophy in a keynote speech delivered at the Interdisciplinary Gender Studies Conference held recently at the Ourimbah campus.

In it she says that architectural social space is not an empty arena within which we conduct our lives, rather it is something which we construct and negotiate. It is this incredible complexity of social interactions and meanings that we constantly construct, tear down and reinvent.

"The city itself," says Anne, "can be viewed as a work of art and a form of theatre in which the inhabitants are the players. There are numerous avenues of possibilities and renovation. That is why it can endlessly reinvent itself; a city that relies on its past or refuses to confront renewal is a city about to die. So artists are drawn to this evanescent space which offers many opportunities for interaction with different spaces and audiences."

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"It's such an extraordinary environment and perfect for artists to connect with other areas. I can already see the enormous potential for people to be uplifted."
Baroque architecture lives

Head of the School of Architecture and Built Environment, Professor Michael Ostwald, compared the work of modern architects with that of the 17th century Baroque school in his inaugural lecture at the Callaghan campus in August.

Professor Ostwald examined the claim that prominent contemporary architects including Frank Gehry and Coop Himmelbllau are part of a New Baroque movement in architecture.

"Like the historic Baroque, the New Baroque is characterised by extravagant decoration, curvaceous forms, a sense of pictorial composition and a preference for complex spatial forms," he said. "Despite this, in terms of motivations and techniques, the connection is more tenuous."

The Baroque movement in architecture, which focussed in Europe in the 17th and early 18th centuries, was characterised by a sense of movement, with effects produced by plays of light and shade, flowing forms, and a mixture of materials and techniques to obtain a cohesion of design and a sense of the infinite.

"In terms of formal evocations of infinite movement, Gehry's Bilbao Guggenheim presents a clear connection to the historic Baroque," Professor Ostwald said. "Yet, while the curvilinear façade and its related oscillating interior are plainly responsible for evoking feelings of infinite space and movement they were not the only techniques used historically to achieve these ends."

The Baroque architects blurred the boundaries separating architecture from art and sculpture, often creating highly theatrical buildings with their interior walls painted and sculptured until they were no longer simply walls. Federation Square in Melbourne is a modern example and architect Coop Himmelbllau has created a similar effect in his JVC Entertainment Centre in Guadalajara, Mexico.

"This building, which is currently nearing completion, is externally sculptured and moulded to reflect the architects' original design sketch. Internally the walls are modelled in complex patterns and forms to provide a dynamic backdrop for projected images and complex, interactive, lighting effects."

Professor Ostwald says that despite their similarities to the Baroque architects, Frank Gehry and Coop Himmelbllau describe their design methods in terms that are more reminiscent of early 20th century expressionism.

"While there are some obvious similarities between the architecture of Frank Gehry and historic Baroque architecture, there are as many differences," he said. "Despite this, we can conclude that, as much as any artificial label for a disparate set of architects' works is valid or accurate, then the title New Baroque is justifiable."

Professor Ostwald delivered his inaugural lecture, entitled 'Infinite Space: The Architecture of the New Baroque', in the Life Sciences Theatre on August 7.

Anti-racism conference

International students visiting the University are important to the city of Newcastle and the Hunter region, an anti-racism conference held at the City Hall in July heard.

The conference, organised by the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET), aimed to highlight the value of multi-culturalism and combat racism in the region.

Community Projects Manager Ruth Gresham told the conference that around 2,500 international students are studying at the University's three main campuses each year, with the University endeavouring to increase the numbers to 15 percent of its total student population by 2006.

"International students bring a range of benefits to the city including diversity, financial benefits, potential business and trade contacts, they attract tourism and act as ambassadors for the city when they return home," Ruth said.

Estimated to bring around $24 million a year into the city, the students are drawn from over 70 countries and come to study undergraduate, postgraduate, pathway and language programs. There are also large numbers of Study Abroad and Exchange Program students, mostly from the US and Europe.

"Their first priority is to gain a qualification and some need to develop English language skills," Ruth said. "Most also want the first hand experience of living in another country so that they will meet Australians and develop friendships."

The students usually travel while they are here and many seek part-time or casual work. What they ask in return is to feel welcome and accepted, and to have access to facilities and services that bring quality to everyday life, including shopping, entertainment and childcare, and quality affordable accommodation.

Co-presenter with Ruth at the conference, Therese Postma from Newcastle City Council, said the Council recognised international students as an emerging group. She said trends of immigration to the city showed a marked decline in the number of people from non-English speaking backgrounds and Newcastle risks falling behind the rest of Australia.

Ruth and Therese said Newcastle must educate the community so they appreciate the value of international visitors, migrants and refugees, and provide business opportunities, facilities and services to attract them.
"The key issue is defence planning, whether we structure our defence forces around Australia on expeditionary forces, in concert with the United States, or on our own in the Pacific region."

Delivers Turner Lecture
The Howard Government has brought Australia to the brink of a defence forces crisis, Federal Labor MP Kim Beazley told an audience at the 2003 John Turner Memorial History Lecture in July.

"The key issue is defence planning," Mr Beazley said. "Whether we structure our defence forces around Australia on expeditionary forces, in concert with the United States, or on our own in the Pacific region."

The Howard Government had cut defence capital programs in the past two years and is currently spending just 1.9 percent of its Gross Domestic Product on defence.

"In the Hawke era, when I was Defence Minister, the Government spent 2.3 percent of GDP on defence. Australia now has one of the lowest rates of public expenditure on defence to GDP in the world."

A rapid turnover at the top, with a new philosophy and shake-up every 18 months has precipitated a defence forces crisis, Mr Beazley said. He called for major reform in defence management saying it had stilled under the Howard Government, which was letting down the men and women of the Australian Defence Forces. The Government is cutting Australia's defence capabilities and has undermined our relationships with our regional neighbours, he said.

"We were part of a community of shared strategic interests around our region under the Keating Government...Howard has severely frayed our relationships with our neighbours. Now we will struggle to build back what we once had in regional security in a time of real danger."

While acknowledging that Australia's relationship with the US is critical to its defence, Mr Beazley said that being part of an alliance didn't include suspending Australian judgement on critical issues. He said that Australia is in danger of losing the coherence that came with bi-partisan cooperation.

"As Howard pursues a flawed policy, we are now poised, as a nation, at the point of failure.

"Security in our region is everything to us. We need to convince them that our relationship with the US is important, not as an umbrella for us but as a link for them, through us, to the most powerful nation on earth."

The former Deputy Prime Minister and Labor Party leader paid tribute to the late John Turner, before delivering the lecture named in his honour at the City Hall in July. The lecture is jointly organised by the University and WEA Hunter in memory of Dr Turner, who lectured in history at both institutions. He was also one of the Hunter's foremost historians, who had a keen interest in local convict history. Dr Turner passed away in July 1998.

Vice-Chancellor Roger Holmes said the lecture was a very important event in the life of the University and the WEA Hunter.

"I am delighted with both the content and the quality of Mr Beazley's lecture and I'm sure that the Prime Minister and the Minister for Defence will call for copies," he said.

He presented Mr Beazley with a painting of Newcastle City Hall by Val Anderson and a University tie. The establishment by the Friends of the University of an $11,000 John Turner Memorial scholarship, to be offered to a first year history student at the University to continue history studies, was announced at the lecture.
Historically motivated

Four historians from the School of Liberal Arts who have amassed more than 270 years of personal history between them will graduate with postgraduate qualifications at the University's graduation ceremonies in October.

The four - Brian Roach (61) MA, Betty Capper (75) PhD, Paula Watts (70) MA and Gloria Higginbottom (66) PhD - have all been motivated by a passion for learning and a love of history.

Gloria and Paula both began their studies, as mature aged students, by completing the University's Open Foundation Course. Neither had done any formal studies for decades and both were nervous about returning to learning.

"I had worked as a nurse educator for 10 years but found the thought of studying again quite scary," Paula said. "But I was tired of the hospital scene and I set myself the goal of completing the Open Foundation Course successfully. The stuff were wonderful."

Paula, who had trained as a midwife before teaching nursing, began her Bachelor of Arts, working as a research field officer for the University while she studied. Her curiosity and her ‘rabid feminism' motivated her to study Honours in history, followed by Master's studies.

“When I read about midwives and their wonderful history of service to the community, I wondered how doctors came to take control of obstetric care in hospitals and the health system,” she said.

Paula wrote a history of the service to birthing women provided by the Benevolent Society of NSW, which began an asylum for single mothers in Sydney in the 1820s and subsequently operated the Royal Hospital for Women at Paddington. Her study, supervised by Dr Glenda Strachan and Emeritus Professor John Ramsland, finishes in 1930, when the hospital began accepting fee-paying patients.

Enhancing the wellbeing of older men

The University is a partner in a cooperative project aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of men over 55 years of age.

The Wellbeing of Older Men Project is an initiative to enhance the mental health and social participation of older men in the Hunter. Funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, it is a partnership between the University, Hunter Retirement Living and the Hunter Area Health Service.

Project Officer Richard Morrison says that while many men have positive experiences of retirement and being older, some face difficulties in later years.

“Men die younger, have poorer health, are often reluctant to go the doctors, can feel isolated and have a high rate of suicide,” he said. “Services are not always appropriate to older men and there is a shortage of research into issues for older men.”

The Wellbeing project will develop an understanding of older men's needs, collaborate with them and service providers to identify gaps, build community support, engage older men with social activities and targeted services, and evaluate and document programs for older men.

Speaking at a launch at Western Suburbs Leagues Club in July, Chair of the project's steering committee and former federal member for Newcasle Allan Morris, said partnership was important to the success of the project. Lecturer in Social Work at the University, Val Clark, and Professor Dimity Pond from the University's Faculty of Health, are members of the steering committee.

"Wellness is more than just the absence of ill health," Val Clark said. "Wellbeing includes having the right balance of mental, physical, social, emotional and spiritual factors in your life. The information gathered through this initiative will help service providers to be aware of specific issues relating to older men. It will also provide an opportunity for students to participate in a valuable community-based project."

Third year social work student Mark Dewhurst recently completed a 10-week placement with the project. He facilitated a men's group at Courtman Hall, an
Paula reflected a sentiment shared by all four scholars when she said: "University opens a whole new world - it's wonderful to learn and to open your mind". She has set herself the personal goal of completing a PhD at the University, which her husband describes as her second home.

Gloria began studying the OFC in 1988, following the death of her husband the previous Christmas. She had never written an essay in her life, having completed her Intermediate Certificate when she was just 14.

"At first I agonised over everything and the first time I got a high distinction, it nearly blew my mind," she said. "It becomes all-consuming at times and now that I've finished my PhD, I'm at a loss."

Gloria's thesis, 'Evatt to Barwick: Australia's Regional Policy and the Problem of Great and Powerful Friends', was completed in five years without the assistance of a scholarship. Under the supervision of Dr Wayne Reynolds, she travelled to Canberra twice a year on her aged pension to carry out research.

Brian Roach, who has just completed his Master of Arts, began his Arts degree at the University in 1973 to upgrade his teaching qualifications. A high school history teacher, he has completed a biography on 'The Life and Times of George Middleton'. Middleton, appointed as Newcastle's first Chaplain to convicts and settlers in 1821, was a controversial figure reportedly absent from his parish a great deal, paying more attention to his 400 acre holding at Paterson.

"I've been accepted to do a PhD at the University next year," Brian said. "I just love it. Some people collect stamps as an interest, some study."

Brian will undertake a biography of Edward Christopher Merewether for his PhD thesis.

Betty Capper, who also worked as a midwife and nurse educator, attributes her mentor and nursing course coordinator Dr Betty Anderson with influencing her decision to begin her Bachelor of Arts at the University in 1983.

"She taught me how to study and a love of studying," Betty explains. "I completed my Diploma of Nursing Administration while doing my BA part-time and working at the Royal Newcastle Hospital in nurse education."

Studying Australian history with Professor John Ramsland during her BA and the History of Western Education as part of her Master of Education Studies gave Betty a love of history. She began working on her PhD thesis, 'The History of the Hospital Matrons, 1868-1980: the Rise and Decline of a Tradition of Female Authority', under the supervision of Dr Hilary Carey, 10 years ago. She took a break to write a history of the Mater Misericordiae Hospital to mark its 75th anniversary, with the resulting book '75 Years of Tender Loving Care' published in 1997. She also contributed a chapter on convict Henry Brown Hayes to the 'Newcastrian Tales' book.

"I'm now 75 and I've done my best work since turning 50," she said. "I've been very fortunate to have kept my mind interested and it keeps on going."

The Courtman Hall group organised outings, barbecues and pizza meals. They also had a speaker from OM:NI (Older Men: New Ideas), an initiative of the NSW Council of the Aging that establishes groups to support men over 55 yrs of age as they move through new life experiences.

Representatives of the OM:NI groups in Charlestown and Toronto presented trees to members of the three partner organisations to commemorate the launch of the Wellbeing of Older Men Project. The University's tree was planted on the Callaghan campus last month.

Mark was also involved in planning and running a focus group, drawn from people randomly approached at a seniors expo held earlier this year. He said the group provided a valuable insight into older men's issues.

"My knowledge of ethics came in handy, as I was able to make sure the focus group participants had their rights fully explained to them," he said. "The placement also involved promoting the project to the community and to service providers."

Mark approached businesses to put fliers in their windows, spoke to hospital social workers and sought out organisations to invite to the project launch. He attended meetings with the over 55's from a variety of men's groups.

"I stood out a little," 21-year old Mark joked, "but I was welcomed by these groups and able to observe and evaluate them. The placement gave me a better understanding of community work and aged care. I really enjoyed it and I hope I'll come into contact with the Wellbeing project again in the future."
Scholarship offers a world of architecture

Second year architecture student Sarah Truscott has been awarded the 2003 Eric Parker Travelling Scholarship.

Applicants proposed a travel program that would allow them to experience architecture that interested them, contribute to their architectural development, and benefit their fellow students.

Sarah grew up in Tamworth and Bathurst, then studied Interior Design at TAFE, winning the 2003 TAFE NSW Medal. Her TAFE qualification allowed her to come into the second year of the Bachelor of Science (Architecture).

Her travel plans include investigations of organic, sculptural and plastic architecture, with a focus on Islamic design.

Eric Parker was the first permanent teacher to be appointed to the fledgling School of Architecture at the Newcastle University College in 1957. He was head of the school from 1957 to 1965 and in 1974 became Professor of Architecture and Dean of the Faculty of Architecture until his retirement in 1984.

Bob Donaldson, a recent Head of the Department of Architecture was one of Eric's students and later worked with him as a colleague.

"Eric set great importance on students looking beyond Newcastle and experiencing all the world had to offer and it was in keeping with that philosophy that the Scholarship was established," he said.

The scholarship is funded from donations and monies resulting from Reunion 2000, which celebrated the 75 year history of architectural education in Newcastle, donations made by alumni of the School and generous support from amongst others, Rice Daubney Group Architects, Stramit Building Products and Newcastle Trades Hall.

In addition to the round the world air ticket and financial assistance, the travelling scholar is also put into contact with a vast international network of former architecture students. Graduates from Newcastle practise around the globe and have been most generous in welcoming previous travelling scholars, Andrew Donaldson (no relation to Bob) and Nic Elias.

Andrew reported that these contacts were in some ways more valuable than the actual financial benefit provided by the scholarship.

"Gil Williams (who graduated in the early 1970s) met me at the airport, gave me a thorough introduction to New York and facilitated access to buildings an ordinary traveller could never get into."

Sarah was presented with the scholarship by Ruth Parker, Eric's widow, at the third Eric Parker Annual Dinner held in August at Awaba House, Booragul. She will give an illustrated talk on her adventures at next year's Eric Parker Annual Dinner.

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Disposing of chemical weapon stockpiles

Environmentally acceptable techniques for disposing of chemical weapons stockpiled during the two world wars was the topic of a seminar delivered at the University last month by a visiting chemical engineer from the United States.

Professor Stanley Sandler spoke on the construction and destruction of chemical weapons consisting of nerve agents such as sarin and VX, blister agents such as mustard and sulphur, and the explosive charges for dispersing them.

"During the two world wars and thereafter, Germany, the Soviet Union, the United States and other countries developed large stockpiles of chemical weapons," Professor Sandler said. "Germany has since destroyed all of its weapons, and the US some of its, by incineration. However, due to strong public resistance to incineration, other techniques will be used for the remaining stockpiles."

Professor Sandler has been involved in evaluating possible alternate destruction technologies for the US Army and the US Congress. These include chemical neutralisation, supercritical water oxidation, biological oxidation, gas phase chemical reduction, plasma arcs, cryofracture, electrochemical oxidation, and other chemical oxidation methods. The seminar examined the successes and failures of these techniques, possible issues and problems and likely public acceptance of them.

Professor Sandler is the HB du Pont Chair of Chemical Engineering at the University of Delaware, and Miegunyah Fellow and Visiting Professor of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering at the University of Melbourne. He is editor of AIChE Journal, author of more than 300 papers and several books. He has received numerous awards from the American Institute of Chemical Engineers, the American Chemical Society and other groups. He has been visiting professor at universities in England, Australia, Argentina and the US.
Social workers need a global perspective

Social workers today need to look beyond their national boundaries to understand the issues affecting their communities, US-based Professor Stanley Witkin said while a visiting scholar at the University in July.

Professor Witkin, who is professor of social work and coordinator of the master of social work program at the University of Vermont in the US, has co-developed a course at the University of Lapland in Finland that focuses on social workers taking a global perspective.

"Many of the issues we face as citizens and social workers don't respect boundaries of nation states any more," he said. "There is a real connection between what we see at a local level and what is happening globally; with issues including environmental health, economic and employment issues all connected. Trying to get social workers to make the connection is important."

Professor Witkin said social workers can no longer afford to think of what they do as only concerning their own community. The SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) scare and the issue of refugees arriving in Australia were good examples of local issues being a function of other things happening in the world.

"There is much that social workers can learn from one another if they are open to that," he said. "Unfortunately, what has happened in the past is that dominant nations have exported their brand of social work to other nations and in many cases it isn't relevant to their circumstances."

The 'Social Work from a Global Perspective' course in Finland addressed these and other issues, creating a space for social work students to hear from each other and learn. Run for the past five years, the course has had around 300 participants from 16 countries. Professor Witkin advocated its benefits to social work students at the University during his stay, encouraging them to attend the Summer School.

As a visiting scholar to Newcastle, Professor Witkin consulted with staff on curriculum and research development. He has known the Head of the School of Social Sciences Mel Gray for several years and is hoping to develop an exchange program between Newcastle and Vermont.

Funding boost for depression treatment

HMRI researchers based at the University have been awarded almost $660,000 from the Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation to help people suffering from depression and co-existing drug and alcohol problems.

The grant will be used in a three-year study into the effectiveness of using innovative Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) treatment.

Frances Kay-Lambkin from the research team at the Centre for Mental Health Studies said CBT was a rapid, targeted, drug-free treatment option.

"People with depression often respond to everyday situations with a negative interpretation which makes them feel terrible about themselves and the world they live in and many people then turn to alcohol and drugs for temporary relief," she said. "CBT specifically targets those interpretations that people with depression have about the world. It tries to make people aware of how depression colours their view of situations and encourages them to develop alternative ways of thinking and responding to situations."

She said the pilot study which commenced late last year had already produced some preliminary results that CBT treatments were effective. There are currently 50 participants in the study who have reported that they are enjoying the program and experiencing positive responses to the treatment.

"The new funding will allow the research to be expanded to include more participants in the Hunter Region," Frances said. "Importantly, the grant allows the research to be extended to rural and remote areas in New South Wales, which will be organised through the Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health in Orange."

Chairman of the Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation, Professor Ian Webster AO, said it was very important to the Foundation to fund this kind of applied research.

"The Foundation is excited to be able to support research initiatives that contribute to understanding the impact alcohol and other substance misuse can have on mental health," said Professor Webster. "Through research initiatives such as this we can take those first tentative steps to discovering a solution to a problem that effects such a broad range of the Australian community."

The researchers are seeking more participants for the study. Eligible participants are those currently experiencing symptoms of depression and who also drink alcohol, smoke cannabis and/or use other drugs as a way of coping.

Those interested should contact the Centre for Mental Health Studies on 4924 6616. Participants will be reimbursed for their expenses incurred during the assessments.
**Federation Square architect speaks**

One of the architects who designed Melbourne’s controversial Federation Square attributed his experience as a teacher with the success of the signature building when he delivered a lecture at Callaghan last month.

Peter Davidson, from LAB Architects, who was originally from Newcastle, said he was 42 and teaching architecture in London when he and his partner won a competition to design Federation Square.

“This was our first building, which shows how important it can be to hold out,” he said. “We were working primarily as teachers, which is a really important activity and I think the only way we were able to relocate from London to Melbourne and complete Federation Square is because we were teachers. We knew how to understand the ideas we were working on and to move them forward.”

He said that experience in the building industry was often over-rated and that his relative inexperience led him to believe that anything was possible. Federation Square, which caused widespread consternation amongst Melburnians during its construction, involves 11 separate buildings and took six years to complete. LAB supervised nine separate construction teams simultaneously.

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**Playgroup volunteers graduate**

“Many of these families have fewer social supports and face challenges in meeting the needs of their children,” said Debbie. “The playgroup will not only provide free childcare while parents are accessing treatment, case management or counselling appointments, but will also provide education and parenting programs.”

Volunteer Sherrie Henry answered an advertisement in the local newspaper to take part in PACSS. With a background in early childhood services, Sherrie has supported a relative with a heroine addiction, who is also a parent.

“Her predicament touched me,” she said. “She’s had a rough trot and I know that many people who become parents have had very little chance themselves.”

Sherrie says the eight volunteers contribute professional input or personal experience to the project. She spoke on their behalf at the graduation ceremony.

“We are delighted that the government has taken the initiative to support a scheme like PACSS,” she said. “We’re pleased that it exists and that we can be part of something so valuable. We are in awe of the significance of the task ahead.”

“Our group spans four decades in years, from the early 20s through to 60s, and includes a young mother, parents, grandparents, craft workers, early childhood workers and we even have a midwife in our midst! We have drawn together in mutual acceptance, respect and appreciation to create a team. A team of volunteers who will be able to contribute to the success of PACSS and ultimately help the children, which is the reason we became involved.”

Debbie says the volunteers will assist families in age appropriate activities in a stress free environment. The volunteers covered topics such as child development, drug usage and its effects, behaviour management, resilience in children, communication skills and issues relating to methadone usage in their training program.

PACSS is a pilot program funded by the Commonwealth Department of Community Services. It is a partnership between the University, Hunter Area Health and Newcastle City Council.
The Federation Square site was residual space left over between the end of the city grid, the Yarra River and railway land. After a series of competitions had failed to yield an acceptable design, Davidson says the site had a history of speculative possibilities for architecture in the city.

"More than 95 percent of the competition proposals put the space as part of the grid but from our point of view, extending the grid wasn’t possible," he said. "We were more interested in the residual space that existed and in the dynamic network of arcades and lanes within the grid that is like a genetic coding in Melbourne."

He said Melbourne had three different real estate values interweaved - something that you wouldn’t usually get in a planned city - that was like an urban ecology and allowed the city to keep reinventing and shifting itself. LAB tried to work that dynamic into the Federation Square design.

"We were castigated during the construction but from the moment people were able to go inside the buildings, their view changed," he said. "We saw it as part of our role to put something out there that does push the boundaries."

Federation Square has become a focal point for public gatherings of all sorts since it opened, including an anti-war demonstration that saw an estimated 50,000 people come together in its plaza this year.

"The absurdity of the world you have to interact with has more impact on the outcome of your work than your intention," he said.

Peter Davidson’s lecture, presented by the School of Architecture and Built Environment in the Life Sciences Theatre in August, was attended by students, staff and local architects.

People & Places

Executive and Corporate Programs sign new deal

The Faculty of Business and Law’s Executive and Corporate Programs group provide tailor-made management development programs to meet the specific needs of industry. One of their current clients is NSW Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation (DTSR).

Executive and Corporate Programs’ Business Development Manager Caddie Marshall says an agreement with the DTSR will see the provision of 24 modules to be undertaken by staff from around NSW.

Director-General of the Department, Lisbet Dean, with Wendy Gillet, Deputy Director General, and John Shipway, Manager of Employee Services for DTSR visited the University last month to discuss the program.

"We had a very productive meeting during which they outlined their expectations for the program and we discussed facilitation methods and the desired outcomes," Caddie said. "The NSW DTSR staff will visit the University over a two year period to attend the Management Development Program. We are very much looking forward to working with the DTSR and building our strategic alliances."

Caddie said the DTSR program would be officially launched on September 16. It is one of a number of new initiatives being conducted by Executive and Corporate Programs. Some of the current corporate clients include, the Department of Education, AlphaOne and Fit For Work, Lawler Partners, Port Warrah Coal Services, the Department of Defence, NSW Police, Energy Australia and Vietnam Airlines. Negotiations are also underway with Hunter Area Health Services, One Steel, NUSport and Hunter Valley Training Company amongst others.

"To enhance our client focus, Executive and Corporate Programs is now Faculty wide. We have also begun to incorporate other disciplines within the University, such as Occupational Health and Safety, which will be involved in delivering programs to injury management and preventative health specialists such as AlphaOne and Fit For Work," she said. "We have developed the program in such a way that participants not only get one unspecified credit towards a higher degree conducted by the Newcastle Graduate School of Business, they also get an Accredited WorkCover Supervisor’s Certificate."
Health researchers profiled

The Faculty of Health launched a new publication highlighting the work of their recent research graduates in July.

The booklet, 'A New Generation of Health Researchers, Research Higher Degree Graduates of the Faculty of Health', profiles graduates from across the Faculty's disciplines and includes descriptions of their research projects, their backgrounds, and their aspirations for the future.

It was launched at an afternoon reception cohosted by the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Professor John Marley, the Assistant Dean Research and Research Training, A/Professor Julie Byles, and Head of the School of Nursing, Professor Kathleen Fahy. Pictured at the launch (left) are A/Professor Byles, Professor John Rostas and Professor Margaret McMillan.

University embodies Spirit of the Games

The University brought home a swag of medals from the 2003 Arrive Alive Eastern University Games (EUG) held in Coffs Harbour in July.

Newcastle finished third overall on 217 points, only 15 points behind winner, the University of Sydney. The EUG has set a great platform for the 2003 Australian University Games, which will be held in Newcastle from September 28.

Newcastle was also awarded the 'Spirit of the Games' trophy for the second year in a row. This trophy is awarded to the university that displays sportsmanship, goodwill and participation.

The University's medal tally included:

Gold: Men's Squash; Mixed Netball; Women's Rugby
Silver: Men's Rugby, Basketball, Hockey, Touch and Tennis
Bronze: Women's Squash, Softball and Touch, Open Baseball and Ultimate Frisbee

Children sow seeds of success

Students from Merewether's Holy Family Primary School are well on their way to a horticultural career through a unique program that is also enhancing the University's Callaghan campus.

As well as greening their school environment, and learning the advantages of planting to increase biodiversity, the children - some as young as five - are this year growing 5,000 plants to green the University grounds. Over 40 species, from grasses and groundcovers to trees and shrubs, are being grown from seed collected locally.

The school's campus has won state and national environmental education awards and its Greenfleet program teaches the children environmental sustainability in a totally unique way. The school's plant nursery grows trees as greenhouse 'sinks' to exchange carbon in the atmosphere. For each of the 300 cars run by the school population, 17 trees are grown and planted to neutralise their pollution.

The plants are maintained by the school's Garden Grubs Landcare Group, which oversaw the planting of over 3,000 trees, grown by students from six of the school's classes, at the University last year. The trees were planted along the bicycle path at the Wirra Crescent exit, and along the ARTnode trail, which borders the ceramics building and No. 4 Oval.

Greenfleet Coordinator Jenny Robinson says other areas around the region benefit from the program including Blackbutt Reserve, which trees have been planted as koala food, the Kooragang Wetlands with casuarinas and wattles as windbreaks, and this year Shortland Wetlands will also be part of the tree planting program.

"We are hoping that by participating in this initiative, the children will learn to value the Earth's resources," Jenny said. "We really look forward to coming back to the University each year to see how our trees are growing."
Science ‘show-offs’ compete

The region's best young science presenters were on show during National Science Week for the finals of the University’s ‘Science Show-Off’ competition.

Terry Burns and Associate Professor Brailey Sims from the Faculty of Science and Information Technology worked with local educators to organise the science competition for primary school students.

Schools researched and performed entertaining presentations on scientific subjects, with cash prizes for the winner and the runner-up, as well as a people’s choice award. There are two divisions in the competition: 10-20 minute science shows, and brief science presentations, less than five minutes long, called busks.

“The standard of the shows and busks was excellent," Terry said. “The productions showed great imagination, great participation and great variety.”

While school students can often see science and technology as dull and inaccessible, the Science Show-Off creates tension and excitement, with time constraints and competition that gives students a sense of the fun of science at an early age and attracts audiences of parents and students.

“Research has established that watching live science shows is an effective way of communicating science and technology to everyone,” Terry said. “This effectiveness is greatly enhanced if the audience is actively involved in the show.”

A team of staff from the University, local schools and the Department of Education and Training was assembled to organise the event, which was funded by a national grant from the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training. The competition is a spin-off of the University’s already successful SMART (Science, Maths And Real Technology) program and research conducted within the Faculty of Science and IT.

The finals were held in August at Newcastle City Hall. Manly Park Public School’s ‘Bright Sparks’ took out first place with their show on static electricity. Hamilton Public School was runner up with their multimedia show ‘Sounds like Rap’ and Hamilton Public School was voted People’s Choice winner by the 200-strong audience. Cessnock West Public School took home the prize for the best science busk.

Reflecting children’s lives in early childhood education

Incorporating a child’s perspective into early childhood education was the focus of workshops held by two international educators and authors at the University last month.

Margie Carter and Deb Curtis, founders of US-based early childhood education consultancy Harvest Resources and co-authors of six influential books, delivered three workshops over two days in July.

Dr Margaret Davies, from the University’s School of Education, said the workshops gave early childhood practitioners from the 0-5 and 5-8 sectors in the Newcastle and Hunter region a unique opportunity to reflect on curriculum developments in the field.

“Margie and Deb have worked as teachers, directors, education coordinators and college instructors and their work is well-known by Australian early childhood teachers,” she said. “Their workshops integrated culturally relevant and anti-bias principles, child-centred practices, and inspiration from the schools of Reggio Emilia.”

The visitors presented three workshops for teachers and early childhood education students:

- Reflecting Children’s Lives: the Real Story of School Readiness;
- Designs for Living and Learning: Transforming Early Childhood Environments; and
- Emergent Curriculum Developed from Children’s Lives.
NUbots take on the world

The University's four-legged soccer playing robot team, the NUBots, have proved their prowess by taking out third place in the RoboCup 2003 World Titles in Padova, Italy in July, in only their second year of competition.

RoboCup 2003 attracted the best 24 teams in robot soccer technology from 13 countries around the world to compete for the title. The team from the Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment defeated the 2002 world champions Carnegie Mellon in a play-off for third place. Team leader Professor Rick Middleton from the School of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science said the Newcastle team had performed brilliantly in the round robin competition.

"We have a wonderful team of highly talented and hard working students, who have worked tirelessly," Rick said, "including a few all-night efforts in Padova."

The NUBots placed second in the Australian Open of the RoboCup 2003 Legged League in Sydney in May behind friendly rivals 'RUNSWift' from the University of NSW.

"We are the new kids on the block", with 2002 our first year of competition," Rick explains. "To be able to perform so well at international level is a great tribute to the dedication of the students and staff involved."

Work on RoboCup topics can count towards the team members' studies. It is part of the Newcastle Robotics Laboratory - an inter-disciplinary research initiative engaging in multidisciplinary robotics research that is supported by the Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment, the School of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science and the ARC Centre for Integrated Dynamics and Control.

The NUBots team is made up of students Michael Quinian, Craig Murch, Graham Shanks, Michaela Freeston, Chris Seysener, with help from Oliver Coleman, and academics Stephan Chalup and Rick Middleton.

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