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Vice-Chancellor's Column

The 'final' version of the Restructure paper was released onto the University's website http://www.newcastle.edu.au/external/reviews/university/restructure/implement.htm on September 4. Further submissions are requested to reach my office (Ms Michelle Bird vssecretary@newcastle.edu.au) by September 22 to enable final recommendations on the University's Structural Organisation and Administrative Arrangements to be considered by the Resources and Administration Committee (12 October), and subsequently by Council on October 26.

Our new Faculties – Business and Law, Education and Arts, Engineering and Built Environment, Health, and Science and Information Technology, will commence operation from January 2002 under new leadership, and with a substantially changed academic organisational structure. The academic organisational building block for the faculties will be schools, which will comprise a substantial number of academic and general staff members. These schools will be of sufficient size to enable the efficient and coordinated delivery of a broader range of academic programs and services, while retaining and promoting disciplinary strengths for teaching and research within these multidisciplinary academic organisational units (AOUs).

Our new Central Divisions – University Services, Research and International, and Vice-Chancellor, will also commence in the new year, supporting the academic and other major objectives of the faculties and the University, as well as playing strong coordinating roles, to ensure that the 'one university' concept is put into practice. In addition, all faculties and divisions will work cooperatively with the Central Coast Campuses, which is our important 'joint venture' with the Hunter Institute NSW TAFE.

The 'roll out' of the staffing structure and individual appointments to AOUs, faculties and divisions of the University will commence in October, following internal advertising, selection and appointment of several senior general staff positions. This will be followed by a substantial 'roll out' of general staff positions within faculties, schools and divisions, under the supervision of the Pro Vice-Chancellors, Executive Heads of Divisions and relevant senior general staff members. The consultation process associated with the selection and appointment of the Heads of Schools, Deputy Executive Deans, and Assistant Deans will lead by the PVCs during October/November, in time for appointment from January 2002. The processes for allocating positions to staff members will be in accordance with published procedures on the web, subject to any approved changes following the consultation process with members of the University.

I am hopeful that there will be a high level of ownership by staff and students of the University of the new structure, which has been brought about by the extensive and intensive consultation processes put into practice from the very start of the restructuring program earlier this year.

Finally, in this column, I would like to pay tribute to Professor Jenny Graham who has recently announced that she will be leaving the University to take a position as Executive Dean of Health at Southern Cross University from late October this year. Jenny will depart the University of Newcastle after many years of outstanding service, initially as Head of Department and Director of School for relevant health science disciplines, Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences, and most recently as Pro Vice-Chancellor External Relations.

Professor Graham has provided the University with excellent leadership in key areas, particularly in supporting our strong working relationships with local communities and bodies, coordinating and promoting our major agenda in internationalising the University, and leading our 2NUR-FM, enabling programs, foundation and alumni activities, marketing and media, and strongly supporting our development as a major University serving our local regions.

Farewell Jenny – may you enjoy your new life in Lismore, and your Executive Dean role at Southern Cross University. May I thank you on behalf of your many friends and colleagues at the University and in the Hunter community for your leadership, friendship and support. Best wishes for your future.

Roger S Holmes
Vice-Chancellor and President

September edition

Editorial enquiries and contributions should be directed to the Editor, Uninews, Marketing and Media Services, phone: 4956 1869 or 0412 128 727, email: pdkib@alinga.newcastle.edu.au.

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Publisher Fran Flavel
Editor Kim Britton

Writers Katie Porritt
Leigh Wallis
Sue Maiden

Contributors Cae Pattison
Latifa Levis

Photography John Freund
Chris Patterson
Stephen McNally

Designer Tim Burns

Cover – South American dancers helped the University to celebrate its cultural diversity at the end of August during the Cultural Awakenings Festival – story and more pics p20. Photography by John Freund.
Restructuring to fortify humanities

Restructuring will provide a more fortified base for the humanities at the University, according to the Pro Vice-Chancellor for the new Faculty of Education and Arts, Professor Terry Lovat.

"Education and Arts is an important amalgamation that pulls together explicitly the humanities oriented side of the University, which has had strong historical links at Newcastle," Terry said.

"Among these humanities will be those with professional training application, as well as those available for liberal study. Together, they present as a more formidable force in the University," he said.

The PVC says the professional outlets to industry, including education, social work, music and fine art, will provide a focus for a lot of the Faculty's teaching as well as potential for applied forms of research.

"The research agenda will be a major one in the Faculty and we are going to have to leave no stone unturned in order to maintain a strong piece in terms of research. We will be examining applications for our research endeavours and making sure that we relate our research as much as possible to the needs of professionals in the community. When those things are in place, we will have a good solid funding base which can provide a firmer underpinning for pure studies in the arts and aesthetics - areas that without that firm funding base may not be possible."

Education and Arts will be the largest of the newly created Faculties, with around one third of the University's students enrolled in its programs. It will have eight schools:

- Aboriginal Studies - created as a separate school to emphasise the University-wide commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and to include Wollotuka and Umalalik;
- Liberal Arts - which will include history, classics and philosophy;
- Humanities - essentially the current Central Coast School;
- Language and Media - comprising English, modern languages, linguistics and speech pathology;
- Education - essentially the current Faculty of Education;
- The Conservatorium - an amalgam of the current Faculty of Music and Department of Drama;
- Fine Art - essentially the current School; and,
- Social Sciences - comprising sociology, anthropology, social work and leisure and tourism.

Each of the schools will have a head and deputy head, and there will also be a Deputy Executive Dean and assistant deans to support the Faculty in essential areas. One of the most radical changes to come about as a result of the restructuring is that the PVCs, who are the executive heads of the new faculties, will also be members of the University's senior executive.

"In a sense, this brings the faculties closer to the centre and creates a better funnel from the top through to the core business of the University," Terry explained. "The University has grown like toppy and become more and more chaotic in its structure; the changes represent an attempt to standardise what we do."

The PVCs will each have a University executive portfolio in addition to their faculty commitments, with Terry having responsibility for the Central Coast Campuses.

"The University-wide role has grown since first mooted to become a major part of the job. For me, the role at the Central Coast is particularly challenging and one I am looking forward to immensely," Terry said. "The Central Coast represents one of the more exciting aspects of the University, with an amalgam of cross-sectoral education that I am certain is part of the way forward for the university sector generally."

Terry says the new structure will only succeed if there is a high degree of ownership on the part of staff.

"It is important that we have retained the term 'Faculty' for the new academic units," he said. "This term is familiar to us and reflects the ongoing commitment to working out of academically coherent groupings. We have avoided the common model that sees PVCs merely administering cost centres and so removed from academic effort and have tried to retain a flat structure, where the PVCs are firstly the chief academics in the faculties and secondly control the infrastructure and resources of their group."

Regular meetings of the Faculty executive and Heads of School will constitute the engine room for the Education and Arts Faculty. Terry says there are opportunities in academic and administrative areas of the new Faculty, which needs people who are tuned in to the peculiar needs of the Faculty at all levels, including financial and students services, international development, and IT needs.

"There are certain peculiarities for education and arts operations as against engineering or science," Terry said, "and we will try to tailor-make the roles within the Faculty so that every service function will be in tune with the particular needs of the Faculty."

The proposal for the Faculty structure will go before the October University Council meeting for approval, and will come into effect in 2002.

Professor Terry Lovat
New frontiers in science

A series of talks on each of the Faculty of Science and Mathematics at its Courses and Careers Evening on September 4.

Bachelor of Psychology is a four-year honours degree program that started in 2002 providing psychological training and practical skills. The new degree combines the science and arts aspects of psychology to create graduates that are equipped to work in areas such as clinical psychology, clinical neuropsychology, counselling, education, forensic psychology, health and sports psychology.

Bachelor of Science (Photonics), offered for the first time this year, investigates and uses particles of light [photons] and is a key technology underpinning the Internet. Graduates will have an excellent knowledge of modern optics, including lasers, detectors, optical waveguides and the photonics industry.

Bachelor of Development Studies is an interdisciplinary program involving geography, sociology, environmental studies and economics that prepares students for careers in areas including policy formulation, implementation and field investigations within government departments and aid agencies.

A series of talks on each of the Faculty's programs was presented during the Information Evening. Information Evenings for all of the University's programs were held from September 3-7.
University mourns US tragedy

The University offered counselling and assistance to the 146 American students currently studying under Study Abroad and student exchange programs at Newcastle in the wake of the devastating terrorist attacks in New York and Washington on September 11.

Acting Vice-Chancellor at the time, Professor Brian English, said the University was deeply saddened by the attacks, and was providing all support possible to American students at the University.

Seven of the students are from Washington DC, five from Pittsburgh, and six from the State of New York. The University put in place a number of measures to assist them, as well as Australian students with friends or relatives in the US.

Assistance and counselling was made available, and students were offered the use of University telephones to contact their relatives and friends in the US or the American Embassy.

“We are extremely concerned for all staff and students affected by this dreadful event,” Brian said.

He indicated that nine members of university staff in the United States on official business (presenting conference papers etc) had been contacted and were safe. The University also has 10 students studying in the States who were reported as safe.

Shocked staff and students gathered outside the Auchenflower Library on September 13 for a ‘gathering of Americans and their friends’ organised by Brian. The Chaplaincy to mark the tragedy.

Attended by international students, Australian students and staff, the sunset vigil – open to all faiths and creeds – was conducted by chaplaincy coordinators, the Rev Julia Perry and Father Dom Carrigan.

Newcastle Muslim Association calls for tolerance

The President of the Newcastle Muslim Association and a graduate of the University, Mr Shazad Pervez, has condemned the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington while calling for tolerance.

Shazad, who graduated with his Bachelor of Commerce in 1999, says that Newcastle’s Muslim community were outraged by the tragic events in which so many innocent people lost their lives on September 11.

“These events were perpetrated by individuals who have no connection with the peaceful, honest and caring people who follow Islam in our community and elsewhere in the world,” Shazad said.

Shazad, who grew up in the Upper Hunter Valley after coming to Australia from Pakistan when he was seven, appeals to all Australians to unite in their condemnation of terrorism, regardless of their background, race or religion.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor Brian English, backed Shazad’s calls for tolerance and understanding of Muslim people both on the University campus and in the wider community.

“The University seeks to support all its students and staff who have been affected by the attacks in America,” he said. “We value the diversity of cultures that are gathered together on our campuses and appeal to people not to let their emotions cause them to discriminate against individuals because of their background or religion.”

Masonry research wins international acclaim

Newcastle engineering researchers are investigating new ways to support the floors within load-bearing multi-storey masonry buildings, so that they can better withstand earthquakes.

The team from the Masonry Research Group in the Faculty of Engineering is looking at the properties of slip-joints, which sit between concrete slabs and their supporting masonry walls.

“These slip-joints are designed to ‘slip’ under long-term effects,” explained Professor Adrian Page, Dean of the Faculty. “What that means is that as concrete slabs shrink and masonry walls expand with time, the slip-joints allow walls and floors to move very slightly, thus avoiding damage. However, to resist earthquake loads, slip-joints must also be able to lock-up under short-term forces, such as an earthquake. Hence the slip joints must satisfy two apparently conflicting requirements.”

The group’s research is identifying which materials can cope with both long and short-term loads in this manner.

“With the introduction of the new Earthquake Loading Code, slip-joints must now be designed for earthquakes as well as long-term loads,” Adrian said. “We’re looking for a product which can perform under both types of pressure.”

Adrian’s research group, including Dr Yuri Toovey and Goran Simundic, recently presented its preliminary findings at the Ninth Canadian Masonry Symposium, and was awarded the prize for the best structural masonry paper.
Following a manual therapy tradition

Foundation Head of the University’s Discipline of Physiotherapy Associate Professor Darren Rivett was following a family tradition when he studied physiotherapy.

Darren’s father, his uncle, and his grandfather were all doctors who worked with manual and rehabilitation therapies. When his grandfather founded what is now the Castlecrag Private Hospital in Sydney, he named it Cabarisha in honour of a mythical North American healer.

“Grandfather was a bit of a maverick in his time and pushed the boundaries of conventional medical practice,” Darren said. “When I was looking for a career, I wanted to carry on working with people in a physical way using manipulation and massage in an orthodox profession.”

Darren graduated from the Cumberland College of Health Sciences and completed his Master’s degree at the University of Sydney, where he lectured in musculoskeletal and manipulative physiotherapy from 1986 to 1991.

In 1994 he became Senior Lecturer at the University of Otago, New Zealand, where he did his PhD. Experienced in both the public and private sectors, Darren has chaired the Academic Board of the New Zealand College of Physiotherapy and advised the New Zealand Government. He is looking forward to introducing the first cohort of students to the University’s Bachelor of Physiotherapy program next year.

“Introducing physiotherapy studies has been on the agenda for the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences since the late 1980s,” Darren said. “The program is proving very popular and we have had a lot of enquiries from all over the country.”

Around 35 students will begin the four-year degree program in 2002. They will undertake a minimum of 1000 hours of clinical practice in a variety of health settings including private practice, hospitals, rehabilitation units, community health centres and outpatient clinics.

Physiotherapy became a registered profession in NSW in the 1940s and Australia is recognised as a world leader. It was one of the first countries in the world to grant first contact practitioner status to physiotherapists, which means patients can go directly to a physiotherapist without a referral from a GP.

“Physiotherapy is a non-invasive profession, which uses a hands-on approach to help the body heal itself,” Darren said.

Australia has been fortunate to have a number of outstanding individual practitioners like Geoffrey Mainland from Adelaide, who have developed systems of treatment that have caught on internationally and raised the profile of the physiotherapy profession around the world,” Darren said. “Australian university education and our scientific approach to health care leads the way as well.”

Darren says the Newcastle physiotherapy curriculum will focus on interdisciplinary studies as well as preparing practitioners to work in rural communities and with socially disadvantaged groups. Statistics from the Australian Physiotherapy Association show that seven out of 10 of Australia’s physiotherapists work in capital cities.

The degree program will also draw on existing strengths in the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences in innovative education and problem-based learning as well as evidence-based practice. While students will be admitted using the Universities Admission Index for next year’s intake, it is anticipated that physiotherapy will use broader based admission criteria in future, along the lines of those used for the Bachelor of Medicine.

There is a strong demand for physiotherapists, about half of whom work in private practice either for themselves or for others. Physiotherapists are employed in almost all of Australia’s elite sporting teams – what Darren describes as the glamorous side of the profession – and are also employed in the public sector. As well as working with musculoskeletal injuries and conditions, physiotherapists also work with patients with neurological and cardiorespiratory disorders eg. rehabilitating stroke patients who may have lost the ability to walk or to hold objects.

While physiotherapy is a relative newcomer to the research arena, Darren plans to establish a research profile at the University and will offer studies at Masters and PhD level. He is currently seeking approval for a study of recent physiotherapy graduates to determine what aspects of their training have been useful to them and whether curricula need to shift in line with changing health problems.

“Physiotherapy is a non-invasive profession, which uses a hands-on approach to help the body heal itself,” Darren said.
Are you father-friendly?

Fathers are being encouraged to think about ways to look after their children, with a new poster released by the University last month.

It’s been developed by the University’s Engaging Fathers Project, a four-year intervention to research and develop father’s involvement with children.

Project leader Richard Fletcher says the poster, based on international research on fathers, lists 113 ways that dads can be involved, under headings such as communicating, teaching, monitoring, errands, affection and protection.

“Traditionally, Dad wasn’t supposed to get too involved and his role was paying bills, being the heavy and role modelling,” he says. “Over recent years there’s been pressure on fathers to do housework, change their share of nappies and look after the kids. That’s fair enough, but it’s only part of the story. There are many, many ways for dads to be involved and while 113 ways sounds like a lot, fathers are already doing many of them.”

The poster, launched in time for Father’s Day on September 2, suggests some areas that dads may not have thought about and helps to broaden ideas about what they really do.

In addition, the Project group is asking family agencies to measure their service on a “father-friendly” checklist.

“We’ve written to all services in the Hunter, asking them to consider a checklist of 17 key points,” Richard says. “Does the service tell men they are welcome? Do staff know the first and last names of fathers? Do uncles, de facto fathers, grandfathers and other father figures understand that they are important?”

The checklist also has hints for services wishing to improve their involvement with fathers.

“Most family services are used to seeing mothers and children, so having posters for ‘parents’ or ‘support people’ is not enough,” Richard says. “Fathers have to be specifically targeted, or else children will continue to be seen as exclusively women’s business. We know that the staff who work in family services want to have men involved, but they underestimate how many men don’t feel comfortable in a place they see as a woman’s territory. So our hints are not meant to criticise the services, but make them more aware of how to get men in the door.”

The poster and checklist are available from the Engaging Fathers Program at the Family Action Centre on 4921-8739.

Mark Arnold
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Sun shines on Open Day

Thousands of people enjoyed brilliant Spring sunshine when they visited the Ourimbah Campus on September 16 for Community Open Day. Representatives from the University's three Central Coast Schools as well as the Faculty of Engineering and Enabling Programs spoke to prospective students, as did staff from TAFE and the Community College. The annual Open Day is held to create awareness of the Campuses on the Central Coast and to provide course information.

Dr Graeme Starr (above), Assistant Dean (International) and previously the Head of the School of Business, left the campus recently, on leave prior to his retirement in December. 'The first academic to be appointed to the Campus, Graeme takes many fond memories with him.

Appointed in December 1990, Graeme was the first of four lecturers who specialised in Business subjects. Known as the "scary foursome" by Campus wits, the four shared an office in the then "fairly basic" conditions, where Graeme recalls with a smile that "there was so much furniture in the room that you couldn't shut the door and we had to use the office in shifts as we couldn't all fit in there together."

Graeme and his fellow academics felt like 'pioneers'. Graeme had previously held the position of State Director of the Liberal Party, had been a Canberra lobbyist and was Senior Adviser to Ian Sinclair, the Minister for Defence in the Fraser Government. His academic credentials include a Bachelor of Arts (Government) from the University of Sydney, a Master of Arts (Public Administration) from Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada, and a PhD, gained as a Woodrow Wilson Fellow, from the University of West Virginia.

Some of Graeme's memories of the early days on Campus include travelling to meetings at the Callaghan campus in the VW mini van that was also used by the gardener to haul super phosphate, chasing the diamond python out of the toilet, dealing with floods, recalcitrant cows and other wildlife. He says that any lacks and deficits were challenged daily, however, by the 'good spirit and good people'.

"As well as lecturing in the newly established Bachelor of Business, we started the political science program for the University at this campus," Graeme said. "We also set about establishing an environment where lecturers were accessible to students and to each other."

He said that responding to the educational needs of the people of the Central Coast, who were keen to have an education provider in their region, was then and continues to be of paramount importance.

Perhaps Graeme's most enduring role during his career at the Ourimbah Campus was his appointment as Head of the School of Business. His philosophy was to mix academia with professional activities, allowing students to move between the two worlds for greater understanding and to gain valuable experience.

"This is the American model which gives them their strength," he said. "We've had some very good students graduate from this Campus who have gone on to very senior positions in government and private enterprise, while others are running their own very successful businesses. I am going to miss the place, especially the people - my academic colleagues and also the people who have been very important to the place such as Elaine Ashard (previously McRae), Nell Anderson and Julie Becker. I particularly enjoyed working with Professor Les Eastcott who inspired people with his vision for the campus."

While admitting he'll be sad to leave, Graeme is also excited by the prospect of retirement.

"I will be doing some consulting work with the Prime Minister for a while and then Bev and I will be travelling, living a different lifestyle, taking time to smell the roses and enjoying our three grandchildren," he said. "It's going to be great."
Scientist discovers new organism

A researcher in the University's Discipline of Biological Sciences has identified a new micro-organism in Australia, which causes problems in dogs.

Postgraduate student Graeme Brown, a veterinary surgeon practising for 30 years in Newcastle, has been researching the biology of free-roaming dogs that live in an Aboriginal community in the Northern Territory.

Working in the laboratory of Associate Professor Tim Roberts, and with the expertise of research assistant Anthony Martin, Graeme has isolated Ehrlichia platys, a microbe not previously detected in Australia.

"Dogs north of the Queensland border in Australia are very susceptible to what is known as 'Tick Bite Fever,'" explained Graeme. "It is an illness which affects young dogs and those newly introduced to an area where they are bitten by the brown dog tick, which thrives in the warmer, drier areas of Queensland, the Northern Territory and northern NSW. A percentage of infected dogs die from the illness."

For many years, vets have suspected that Tick Bite Fever was due only to Babesiosis - a disease also carried by the brown dog tick - and have often found their treatments to be unsuccessful. The research group's tests of blood samples from dogs in the Aboriginal community, however, indicated that these dogs had in their blood, a new intracellular micro-organism called Ehrlichia platys.

"We also found it in the ticks themselves," Graeme said, "and this microbe is most likely the cause of the disease and the deaths of the dogs."

Ehrlichia platys is thought to have originated in Africa, and was first described in the United States in 1978. It has never before been detected in Australia and Graeme believes it may have entered the country via Asia.

"Now we have identified the microbe, we know that if a dog is carrying the brown dog tick, there is a reasonable chance that it will be infected with Ehrlichia platys. This means we can screen dogs for the presence of this intracellular infection, and also work on ways to improve the treatment of infected animals."

Tim Roberts, who is supervising Graeme's work, says the discovery is groundbreaking research.

"You could count on one hand the number of new bacteria discovered in Australia in recent years," he said. "This will have a huge impact on the veterinary field, and is another example of the value of pure research."

Associate Professor Roberts emphasised the need for the Federal Government to increase funding for basic research to complement the current trend of supporting only applied research in Australia.

The discovery of the micro-organism is the subject of a leading article in the latest edition of the Australian Veterinary Journal, which describes the discovery as "among the most exciting... within the area of canine infectious diseases in Australia in the past decade".

Watch what you eat - a simple solution to asthma?

A new study by respiratory and nutrition researchers is trying to establish whether the prevalence and severity of asthma can be reduced by what people eat.

The new research is being undertaken by Hunter Medical Research Institute's Dr Peter Gibson and Research Fellow, Lisa Wood, with Associate Professor Manohar Garg from the University, through a grant of $20,000 from the Hunter Medical Research Institute.

There is evidence to suggest that asthma causes the body to produce excess quantities of damaging chemicals called oxidants.

"In healthy people, antioxidants, which can be obtained from the diet, 'mop up' these oxidants, preventing them from doing damage," Lisa said. "However, in asthma, it appears that the high quantity of oxidants overwhelms the body's antioxidant defences, resulting in damage to the airways."

The researchers think that it is this process that is contributing to the severity of the disease and are interested to see if altering a person's diet, by giving them the right type of antioxidants, will modify their asthma. Their study is the first to systematically characterise oxidative stress and antioxidant deficiencies in the airways and blood of asthmatics.

"We hope that this study will pave the way for further trials of dietary supplements that could potentially prevent asthma," Peter Gibson said. "We know that reduced fresh fruit and vegetables is associated with poorer lung function and increases in asthma."

The study will be conducted at John Hunter Hospital and will begin early next year.
University volunteers thanked

Last year Australia impressed the world with the generosity and enthusiasm of the large numbers of volunteers who donated their time to help visitors and athletes attending the Sydney Olympic Games.

"I was struggling for breath, trying desperately to get my head above the water. Each time I got to the surface, another wave pushed me under. I was completely exhausted. My lungs were burning, and I had no feeling in my arms and legs. I thought I was going to die. And then I saw the hand. It reached towards me and pulled me onto the boat. As I lay there, coughing up water, I've never felt so grateful.

Surf Life Saving Australia is just one of the ways volunteers are making a difference. To find out more about volunteering call 1300 654 643 or visit www.govolunteer.com.au
Halfway through 2001, the International Year of Volunteers, the University thanked the many kind volunteers who support External Relations Division programs with a dinner held in the University Club.

There are more than 100 volunteers, representing an enormously valuable resource, working in the External Relations Division including:

- the Family Action Centre - in the Home-Start and Men and Boys programs and in administration at the Centre
- 2NUR-FM - where volunteers are responsible for much of the programming;
- Enabling Programs, which has a volunteer mentoring scheme; and
- International Student Care program, which links international students with companions to improve the quality of their time in Newcastle.

Volunteers also contribute their time and effort through the University Foundation, Convocation and the Friends of the University.

Director of the Family Action Centre (FAC) Judi Geggie says that running volunteer programs provides a really effective way for the University to be a functioning part of the community and helps us to build our social capital.

“Our volunteer programs provide an important link between the community and the University and provide access to the University for people who otherwise might not have it,” she said. “Volunteers play a vital role in helping to create and build networks and provide us with access to previously untapped sources of expertise and skill in the community.”

Home-Start volunteers alone, who train with the FAC for 10 weeks to support local families identified through the program, contribute services worth around $130,000 a year to the community.

“As well as being of tremendous benefit to the community and to the people they are helping, our volunteers benefit themselves,” Judi says. “As well as the personal satisfaction of helping others, they develop their own support networks with other volunteers and many of them gain confidence, and may go on to study or seek paid employment as a result of voluntary work.”

The External Relations dinner to thank volunteers was held at the University Club on August 15.

How you can help...

While not everyone can volunteer their time to support the University’s programs, there are other ways to contribute. If you have ever thought about donating to charity, why not keep it close to home by supporting the excellent work done by the Family Action Centre, the Special Education Centre and 2NUR-FM. Nine generous members of staff have already signed the form authorising a payroll deduction fortnightly to assist the work of the FAC. The Special Education Centre and 2NUR-FM have also arranged for staff to be able to support them through payroll deductions.

To make a donation, contact:
Family Action Centre
ph: 4921 6858

Special Education Centre
ph: 4921 6268

2NUR-FM
ph: 4921 5555.

2NUR-FM appeal breaks records

2NUR-FM have raised $34,000 in their Winter Sign Up appeal, making it the most successful appeal in the station’s 23 year history.

Manager John McGahen said the overwhelming support from existing and new ‘friends’ confirms that listeners enjoy the station’s new ‘Easy Listening’ programming and its ‘On Air’ announcers.

“We at 2NUR extend our sincere thanks to all those ‘friends’ who have supported our appeal and look forward to your continued encouragement,” he said. “Our local volunteer support team can take a special bow for their commitment to this year’s sign up - it was their assistance in setting up and running the appeal that made it so successful.”

Donations to 2NUR-FM are tax deductible and can be made by contacting the station on 4921 5555.
centre stage
Centre for Materials

Background
While on sabbatical in 1999, former head of the Department of Physics John O'Connor was approached by a company seeking help with a project that required input from experts in physics, geology and civil engineering. John realised that despite a lot of collaboration between science and engineering, the University had no structures to bring such a multidisciplinary team together to do the job. His proposal to create a Centre for Materials at the University, which would allow for individuals and disciplines working with a variety of different materials to come together for research, was endorsed by University Council last year.

Structure
The Constitution of the Centre lists its objectives, which include:

- facilitate and undertake high quality multidisciplinary research;
- attract resources for research;
- provide a focus for undergraduate and graduate training and research.

A three stage development has been approved that will:

1. combine facilities and expertise to market externally under one banner;
2. act as a unifying body to foster collaborative research to enhance opportunities to attract both public and private research funding; and
3. formally establish a research centre with comprehensive responsibility for the group, its facilities and its direction.

A Management Committee comprising the DVC Research, the Director, and the Deans of the Faculties of Engineering and Science and Mathematics, which will meet at least twice each semester, will manage the Centre.

Research
The Centre, which began functioning in January this year, brings together geologists, chemists, physicists, civil engineers, mechanical engineers, electron microscopists and chemical engineers. It utilises facilities capable of techniques ranging from large-scale testing of masonry and rock walls to analysing the atoms on a surface. It includes some of the University's most productive researchers, able to tackle problems from yield stress to friction, whether it involves liquids, solids, particles or bulk materials.

One of the key advantages to the Centre is in marketing the University's extensive materials analysis facilities and research capabilities to industry under one name. This will not only increase the credibility of its research consultancy but also offer industry a more complete package of analytical approaches. Members of the Centre will showcase their research expertise to industry at a forum proposed for later this year.

The Centre will provide graduate students with an opportunity to work on multidisciplinary, industry sponsored projects giving them a much broader range of skills and knowledge than that currently available to them. One of the prime goals of the Centre is to build a successful record of collaborative projects undertaken for industry to enable them to bid for a Centre of Excellence in Materials in the future.

Director
A/Professor John O'Connor was born in Newcastle and completed his Bachelor of Science at the Australian National University in 1975. He completed his PhD research on Low Energy Ion Scattering at ANU under the supervision of Ron MacDonald, who is now the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) at Newcastle. After spending two years as a research fellow at Sussex University in England, John followed Ron to Newcastle as a lecturer in physics in 1981. He has been at the University since then, including seven years as Head of the Department of Physics from 1991 to 98. He was awarded a Doctor of Science from ANU in 1999.

John is currently President of the Australian Institute of Physics and is a member of the Australian Research Council's panel for Physics, Chemistry and Earth Sciences. He has a strong research record with more than 140 refereed publications and two books to his credit, as well as having attracted more than $5 million in research funding.
Goethe German prize awarded

Germany's Deputy Consul-General in Australia Sibylle Sorg presented the prestigious Goethe Prize to outstanding German language student Claire Sidebottom in a ceremony at the University last month.

Ms Sibylle Sorg said the Goethe prize was established by the German government to reward outstanding German language students from universities around the world and provide them with a boost to their career. It is only offered to students who fit the rigorous criteria each year. Sigmund Freud was an early winner.

"Goethe was a multi-talented person, who undertook a variety of activities during his time including literature, law, public administration, politics and natural science, and succeeded in all of them," she said. "He sets an important example for students today, when success in a variety of endeavours puts you in a very good position."

Claire, who has completed a major in German and is a good example of someone succeeding in different arenas, is currently working to complete her major in psychology. The former St Francis Xavier student studied German at high school before doing a 12-month exchange to Bochum in Germany after school. She returned to Germany - this time to Essen - over the last summer vacation, when she won the DAAD scholarship through the University.

"I'm really excited to win the Goethe prize. It's great to have some recognition for working so hard," Claire said at the presentation. "I've enjoyed studying in the Modern Languages Department and I've learned a lot - people I saw again when I went back to Germany this year were astounded at the improvement in my language."

Claire hopes to continue with her German studies on graduation from her Bachelor of Psychology and may seek to do postgraduate studies in Germany. She received her prize - a certificate and a collection of German literature and art books - in the Office of Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Science Professor John Ramsland on September 17.

"The Goethe prize has been awarded at Newcastle more times than at the University of Sydney," John said. "We are very proud of all our candidates and of the standard of German studies here. There have not been many years within my experience when we have not been able to award the prize."

Celebrating musical achievements

The University's Faculty and Conservatorium of Music held its annual Scholarship Presentation and Concert last month.

One of the most important events in the Faculty's calendar, the concert celebrates the achievements of students and provides an opportunity to acknowledge the support of sponsors and friends.

The concert featured the scholarship and prize winners, with performers including the recipient of the prestigious Doris Smith Scholarship, Miriam Allan, and Dean's medallist, saxophonist David Dollinger. Faculty staff members John Kellaway and Colin Spiers performed a work written by the winner of the Music Lovers Club Award for Composition, Katrina Pring.

Recipient of the University Prize named in honour of Australian composer Horace Keats, Jane Nicolle, presented a selection of his short songs in the presence of his son Brennan.

The free Concert was held in the Conservatorium Concert Hall on September 10.
Prestigious award for Newcastle student

Winner of the 2001 Margaret Senior Wildlife Illustration Award, Jan Sherlock hopes to combine her love of science and art into a successful career.

Jan, who moved to Newcastle from Melbourne to study the University's wildlife illustration course, submitted a portfolio of 12 illustrations for the award, which was contested by 11 Newcastle students.

The award was first presented in 1984 following a bequest by renowned wildlife illustrator Margaret Senior, and marks the University's dedicated wildlife illustration course — the only one of its kind in Australia.

Design Lecturer, Christine Sanders, says it is a highly specialised course. "It is designed to produce people who support the natural history side of science," Christine said. "We have art, design and science students from interstate and overseas who have heard about the course and its excellent reputation and made the decision to come here and study."

The $1000 award, presented in collaboration with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, is aimed at encouraging further study and research into the area of wildlife illustration.

"The students are assessed on the basis of their artwork skills along with their ability and desire to pursue a career within the area of wildlife illustration," Christine said.

Past award recipients have found work with the Royal Botanic Gardens, museums, the CSIRO, publishing companies and as freelancers. This year's award was presented by the Acting Director (Education and Community Programs) of the National Parks and Wildlife Service Lynne Webber on August 20 in the foyer of the University's Design building.

Pam Collins 18 August, 1944 – 5 September, 2001

Relatives and friends of University switchboard operator Pam Collins, who passed away suddenly on September 5, planted a tree in the McMullin courtyard in her memory last month.

Friend Leone Richards, who met Pam when she began working on the switchboard of the former Hunter Institute of Higher Education (HIHE) 12 years ago, said she was a kind and caring person who "exuded an aura of warmth", was natural and without pretence. Leone said Pam, who moved across to the University switchboard in 1991, was a dependable source of information about the whole University and was blessed with a wonderful sense of humour.

IESD colleague Andrew Pollack, who worked close to Pam in the McMullin Building, said she was "everyone's friend", who would continually go out of her way to help others. He described Pam and husband John as instrumental in running the Newcastle MG Car Club and the Marrara Hill Climb event. He likened Pam and fellow switchboard operator Margaret Clare to other famous partners like Laurel and Hardy or Javerne and Shirley.

"Pam got so much pleasure from making other people happy. She was a wonderful lady and will be missed by all," Andrew said.

The tree planting ceremony, conducted by Father Dom Carrigan from the Chaplain's office and held in the McMullin Courtyard on September 14, was attended by Pam's husband John, her mother Vera, sister Brenda and other family members as well as around 80 University staff members.

A collection at the tree planting ceremony raised $580 to be donated to the Hunter Orthopaedic School.
Students research Indigenous health in Chile

Six Newcastle students will study the health of Indigenous people in Chile under the Federal Government’s UMAP scheme over the next few months as part of a growing network of University links to the South American nation.

Coordinator of the UMAP trip and lecturer in Anatomy Dr Heraldo Povea-Pacci says that all six students selected will take two weeks of intensive Spanish lessons at the University of Santiago before going on to the region they have chosen for their individual research project.

“The University’s involvement with Chile began when I won a UMAP scholarship to go on an academic exchange there three years ago,” Heraldo explains. “The Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences sent 15 students that year, five students and three academics last year and this year six students and an academic.

“Other areas of the University are also getting UMAP funding for exchanges including Education and Building. The exchanges have led to us forming relationships with several universities in Chile, including Arcei University, where we are collaborating to set up a conjoint Masters degree. There are a lot of spin-offs at the Faculty level and the students play a wonderful part in spreading our unique brand of medical training to Chile.”

The students were chosen on the quality of their project proposals and on their personal qualities. Heraldo expects quite a few publications to come from their experiences in Chile. They received Spanish tuition at the University before departure.

Paul Scott and Anna Parseh, both in the 5th Year of their Bachelor of Medicine studies, were the first to leave last month. Anna will develop a cultural model of childhood obesity in the rural Mapuche Indigenous population in the south, while Paul plans to extend a study of Type 2 Diabetes undertaken in the Torres Straits Islands in two Indigenous communities in Chile.

Nick McLeod, in the fourth year of his Bachelor of Medicine, will compare the beliefs and attitudes to health of Mapuche leading a traditional life in the south of Chile to those living in the cities. First Year Aboriginal medical student Matthew Pipe will look at attitudes and beliefs in the Indigenous communities to Hepatitis A. Solange Green, also a first year medical student, will study problem based learning in training for intercultural health.

Kim Probert, who as a fourth year law student is the only non-medical student to be selected, will travel in the north and south of Chile to study land use and health in the Mapuche communities.

Also travelling to Chile this year is final year medical student Brendan McMullan, who is using a UMAP scholarship he won last year to study disparities in Indigenous child health. Brendan, who went to Chile at the end of September, will compare the health of children in rural and urban clinics and hospitals and interview parents.

“I’ve done some public health projects in Vietnam,” Brendan said. “Language is one of the biggest barriers and the experience can be quite confronting but it is also a lot of fun and is immensely enriching.”

Relieving the suffering of the ‘Stolen Generation’

The Awabakal Aboriginal Medical Service in Newcastle has been granted $180,000 from the Commonwealth Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health to provide services to victims of the ‘Stolen Generation’.

Professor John Lester and John Maynard from the University will speak with victims and service providers, about how best Awabakal can service and meet the health needs of these people.

“Aboriginal people who were victims of the ‘Stolen Generation’ and were forcibly removed from their families have had minimum support to cope with their personal, social, psychological and physical trauma,” John Lester said. “They have generally been left to suffer in silence and in many instances, in total isolation from family.

“It is critical to gather first hand their opinions on how their experiences can be best catered for in a health environment. They may identify the need for support group, specialist health care, home visits, social or cultural healing programs, or the satisfaction of knowing they are not alone with their daily torment.”

John Lester and John Maynard of the Umalliko Indigenous Higher Education Research Centre at the University are Aboriginal researchers with years of work experience in and with Aboriginal communities, giving them a natural and professional cultural understanding.

“One of the ‘Stolen Generation’ victims have never identified themselves publicly, being forced to accept their suffering alone,” John Lester said. “These are the types of victims the research hopes to tap into. Providing them with an opportunity to express their needs so that they can be passed on to Awabakal, will enable development of services in direct response to the needs of the clients.

“Reconciliation must start with acceptance and healing the past injustices. With the assistance of some of the victims coming forward to the Awabakal AMS, the important task of healing can continue across the Hunter Valley and Central Coast,” he concluded.

Any victims of the ‘Stolen Generation’ who were removed from their Aboriginal families that would like to talk, to the researchers can make contact by phoning John Lester on 4921-7495.
University facilities carry off awards

* Lower Hunter Civic Design Awards – Overall Award for Excellence in Civic Design

The annual Lower Hunter Civic Design Awards attract many nominations from within the five Lower Hunter Local Government Areas. This year the quality of nominations for projects on the University’s campuses resulted in a special award to the University’s Physical Planning and Estates Team. The jury unanimously selected the PPE team as overall winner from nominations in seven categories. In making this special award the jury observed: ‘The team has shown vision and innovation in planning, designing and overseeing construction of a number of significant building projects. The team has placed significant emphasis on ESD, quality of landscaping and ensuring innovative and interesting building form’.

* Sustainable Development Award – Student Services Centre

This award is given to non-residential developments displaying the principles of environmentally sustainable development. The adaptive reuse of the Hunter Gymnasium was recognised as a waste reduction and cost efficient initiative for the University. The vacant building was converted into the Student Services Centre and where appropriate, the building’s original finishes were retained including the internal Tasmanian oak wall linings, the tiled and timber flooring. A mixed mode air conditioning system was installed throughout the building, which allows natural ventilation on average temperature days and reverts to air conditioning for extreme conditions. Energy metering shows this building consumes 50 percent less energy compared to similar sized, fully air conditioned buildings.

* Dangar Award – Life Sciences Building

This award is for large scale, non-residential developments. The Life Sciences Building physically links the Medical Sciences Building with the Biological Sciences Building, and also symbolises the academic bonds forged between faculties for teaching and research in the bio-technology area. Providing much improved pedestrian and disabled access to the existing buildings and maintaining service access to the adjacent library, loading dock and substation in the centre of the site dictated a need for a very innovative solution, which resulted in the raising of the building off the ground, shaped by a great cantilever. The building makes extensive use of natural light and ventilation and the judges considered the facility to provide an uplifting and thought-provoking work and research environment.

* Institution of Engineers Engineering Excellence Award – Life Sciences Building

This innovative building won a major award for Northrop Engineers at the presentation of the excellence awards of Newcastle division of the Institution of Engineers, Australia. The building comprises three levels of laboratories with a mezzanine plant room supported off the roof. The first floor of the building varies between six and 14 metres to the ground. The northern end of the building cantilevers an extraordinary 14.6 metres where it is supported by an inclined strut, which meets the ground 21.6 metres from the northern tip of the building. Precast jointing techniques were developed especially for the project. The strut members and the use of compression fuses to reduce earthquake loading experienced by the structure are also unique.

* Menkens Award (Multi Unit Dwellings) – Barahineban

This award is for a residential development. The concept for the project combines a passive and active ecological platform on which varying social interaction spaces occur in close proximity to the greater community, with an external common courtyard. The concept for the open internal walkways overlooking the great central courtyard was derived from the “Village” of the temporary residential complex erected on the site following the 1989 earthquake. Energy is an important consideration to the development, with each unit being designed to take advantage of passive solar and cross-ventilation opportunities.

* Charles Davis Awards (Certificate of Merit) – Engineering F Extension

The judges were impressed with the connection of the original engineering building with the new wing, which houses the Faculty presentation room, postgraduate areas, CAD laboratories and the Centre for Sustainable Technology. The junction between old and new provides main entry points to the new complex. The building provides vistas in three directions to the campus outside and reinforces the perception of being in the bush.

* MBA Excellence in Building Awards – Engineering F Extension

The University’s Engineering F extension also won the Master Builders Association Environmentally Sustainable Development category for a robust, low maintenance building that rejoices in its bushland setting. The building’s ongoing heating and cooling costs have been reduced by providing internal thermal mass that is protected from the outside elements by either insulation or ventilated wall cavities. External walls are generally concrete block, inner skin with a ventilated cavity on the outside, clad in metal sheeting or fibre cement sheet. Elements are expressed simply, giving the building its character as well as reducing costs. Natural thermal ventilation is enhanced by specifically calculated areas of louvre and awning window openings as well as low level solid louvres and highlight glass louvres to the internal circulation splaylight, which enable the creation of a thermal stack ventilation effect. Roof water falls from the gutterless roofs into pebbled dish drains which filter the water directly into the soil, without the need for conventional gutters, downpipes and in-ground stormwater pipe systems.
Shooting stars

A group of Newcastle film students have won a national competition that has not only led to commercial work but may establish them on the path to careers in the film industry.

Four third year Bachelor of Arts (Communication) students majoring in video were part of the five-person team that won the major prize in the Shoot Out competition in Newcastle in July, for their short film Dolly and Fluffy.

In its third year, the Shoot Out challenges filmmakers from around Australia to make a seven minute video in 24 hours using only in-camera editing and incorporating Newcastle locations. Established to raise the profile of Newcastle film locations, the Shoot Out has grown dramatically with more than 1200 filmmakers taking part in this year's contest.

Dolly and Fluffy producer Paul Burke said the group had decided to use the Shoot Out as practice for their University video assignments. He and fellow students Justin Craickshank, Joe Mitchell and Bob Corbett brainstormed the concept for their film, which follows the adventures of a doll and a toy dog, and friend Josh Calloway wrote the music, for which he won the Shoot Out prize for best original composition.

“The skills we've learned in our course provided the backbone for our winning film,” Paul said. “If we hadn't had that training, we would have struggled.”

Their success in Shoot Out led to a request from Newcastle musician Grant Walmsley (formerly of the Screaming Jets) that they make a music clip for the debut single of his new band Hang Seng.

The group joined with other communications students including 20-year-old Janet Craickshank to shoot the clip in a room behind Newcastle's Mission Theatre.

“The song is called One More Chance and the clip has been sent to all the music shows including Rage, Video Hits, Pepsi Charts and to Channel V and MTV, so we hope that the song succeeds and our film gets some airplay,” Janet said.

The Shoot Out group won a $10,000 film making package, which they plan to use for a new venture when they complete their studies at the end of the year.

“We've agreed to sit on it until we finish our individual projects,” 25-year-old Joe said. “Winning this package has presented us with a massive opportunity to pursue our film-making beyond graduation but there are so many options we can choose.”

Shoot Out took place on July 13 and 14 with the top ten and the winning Under 18 videos screened to a capacity crowd at Club Nova on July 15. They have been shown at Sydney's Valhalla Cinema and will tour the country in coming months. The University also had other connections to Shoot Out, with the inaugural winner of the Shooting Star Competition, where actors attempt to appear in as many Shoot Out films as possible over the 24 hour period, being won by Drama student Jane Dickinson. Jane, who appeared in an astonishing 38 films, won a screen test with Mullin Casting Agents and an audition with Bedford and Peace Management.

The University also sponsors the $500 cash prize for the Best Under 18 film, which was won this year by Merewether High School students Kate Britton (Director), Jacqui Bruce (sound), Storm Murphy (art direction) and Jess Arnold (actor).

Farley's journey revealed in human rights lecture

Chair of the NSW Reconciliation Committee and land rights advocate Rick Farley will deliver the University's inaugural Human Rights/Social Justice Lecture at the Griffith Duncan Theatre this month.

In his lecture, reconciliation ambassador Farley will describe the “Personal Journey” that led him to abandon his high profile position as Head of the National Farmers' Federation and pursue ways to achieve better relations between Aboriginal and white Australia.

Managing Director of the Farley Consulting Group (FCG), Rick Farley is an Ambassador for Reconciliation and is also chair of the NSW Government Resource and Conservation Assessment Council and of the Lake Victoria Advisory Council for the Murray Darling Basin Commission. He has been a member of the National Native Title Tribunal, the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, the National Landcare Council, the Australia China Council and the Commission for the Future. He has held executive positions in the Soil and Water Conservation Association of Australia, the National Farmers' Federation and the Catchment's Union of Australia. He was one of ten eminent Australians to deliver Barton Lectures to celebrate the Centenary of Federation this year.

The University of Newcastle Annual Human Rights/Social Justice Lecture has been inaugurated to provide an opportunity for members of the University and the wider community to reflect on issues of social justice that challenge Australia today. The University will invite a prominent person active in the area of human rights to deliver the lecture annually.

Rick Farley will deliver the first in the lecture series in the Griffith Duncan Theatre at 1pm on October 17. Admission is free and members of the public are encouraged to attend. For further information contact the Equity and Diversity Unit on 4921 6547.
Too SMART for their own good?

The Science, Maths and Real Technology (SMART) program, developed by the University’s Faculty of Science and Mathematics, has grown so popular it is looking for a sponsor to help it continue.

Associate Professor John O’Connor, who helped develop the program, says schools across the Hunter region are flooding it with requests for SMART science shows.

“The SMART shows we’re presenting at the moment are called ‘Sounds Good’,” John explained. “Like all SMART shows, ‘Sounds Good’ teaches children about science and technology in an exciting and fun way. We’ve had an overwhelming response, particularly from primary schools.”

The SMART team have already presented more than 40 shows and have bookings for around 150 more! With another 40 shows to go, schools and libraries expressing an interest in shows, the group can’t afford to meet the demand.

The SMART program began in 1999 with about 37 shows, and in 2000 was awarded a National Science Week grant, which financed 122 “Spy! Fun Science!” shows. The shows are being presented across the Hunter region, including locations such as Singleton, Aberdeen and Muswellbrook.

“We believe strongly in providing equal access to the SMART program and therefore don’t charge for the shows. Our first batch of shows was made possible by the valuable and most welcome sponsorship of Wickham Self Storage and TUNRA, but we won’t be able to continue unless we find additional sponsorship,” John said.

The demand demonstrates the need for this type of education in schools, and SMART are hoping to find a sponsor so they can continue to educate students about science and technology. Programs such as SMART that encourage children to study in these areas were recommended by the Chief Scientist’s 2000 report.

For sale

Academic gown (Bachelor degree), used once. $80 Ext 5937.

For sale by tender 08/01

The following items are available for sale by tender.

Item 1: Audio Player/Recorder - Revox B77 MkII - Reel-to-Reel 1/4 inch
Item 2: Film Camera - Locam II - 16mm Hi-Speed - Model 51 - 500fps
Item 3: Edit Controller System - Sony BVE 910 - Controller/Disk Drive
Item 4: Visions Mixer/Effects Generator - Sony DSR500 - CPU & Desk
Item 5: Video - Equipment Rack - Full Size
Item 6: Video - Equipment Rack - Full Size

For further information please phone Greg Bodey on 4921 8608.

The goods are sold in “as is” condition and the University reserves the right to reject any or all tenders. Tenders close on Friday, 19th October at 11:30am and should be forwarded to: The Tender Box, Supply Section, The University of Newcastle, University Drive, Callaghan 2308. Please mark clearly on the sealed envelope “TENDER 08/01”.

Notice of meeting

The Annual General Meeting of Convocation will be held on Tuesday 23 October 2001 at 6.00pm in University House, cnr King and Auckland Streets, Newcastle.

The primary purpose of the AGM is to elect members to the Management Committee for a two (2) year term; and the Deputy Warden for a one (1) year term. Nominations close at 5.00pm Monday 22 October 2001. The Management Committee meets every two months at the Callaghan Campus in the evening.

Associate Professor Ray Watterson, Faculty of Law, University of Newcastle will be the guest speaker.

Nomination forms and further details can be obtained from the Convocation Office.

Telephone (02) 49218762, fax (02) 49218730 or email: convocation@newcastle.edu.au.

Hunter Lecture

Phillip Adams AO will present the lecture on Monday 26 November at 6.30pm in the Civic Theatre. His topic is “Urban Design is Vital for Newcastle”.

Accommodation - Myrtle Cottage, Newcastle Hill

Myrtle Cottage stands in a wooded garden on the North slope of Newcastle Hill and has views over the harbour and out to Stockton Bight. It is a renovated 20th century structure with two small bedrooms, good sized living room with French windows overlooking the garden, eat-in kitchen, bathroom and laundry. It is fully equipped and is an ideal location for visitors or new arrivals to Newcastle, being in easy walking distance of restaurants, cinemas, concert and theatre venues, art galleries, rail and bus transport, and the beach. Ph. 49211118.

Email: john.birch@hunterlink.net.au.
Sporting heroes celebrated

The University has celebrated its sporting heroes in the past month, presenting sports scholarships to six students and naming the University Sportsperson of the Year at the Sports Union Blues Dinner.

Champion windsurfer Michael Lancey was named Sportsperson of the Year at the Blues Dinner on August 31 and also won a University of Newcastle Sports Scholarship.

Michael is enrolled in a Bachelor of Medical Radiation Science (Diagnostic Radiotherapy) program. His achievements in the 2000 academic year included:

- NSW Youth Yachtsman of the Year;
- 2nd in Australian Universities Windsurfing Championships;
- 1st in the NSW State Windsurfing Championships in June 2000;
- 3rd in Sail Melbourne International regatta in January 2001;
- 1st in the Australian Open Championships in January 2001;
- Selected in Australian Olympic Squad;
- Currently ranked No1 windsurfer in Australia.

Triple Paralympic gold medallist Heath Francis was presented with the Friends of the University Sport Scholarship by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Brian English in a ceremony in the Chancellery on August 27. Heath won one silver and three gold medals at the 2000 Paralympics in Sydney and this year received an Order of Australia medal.

Other winners of University of Newcastle Sports Scholarships were:

- Leigh Pastfield – hockey, studying Bachelor of Design (Visual Communications);
- Nicole Williams – athlete (running), studying Bachelor of Medicine;
- Ryan McMahon – triathlete, studying Bachelor of Arts; and
- John Cannon – rugby, studying Bachelor of Engineering (Civil)/Bachelor of Surveying.

"There is a considerable wealth of sporting talent at the University," Brian said. "These scholarships encourage our students to pursue their sporting abilities."

Rowers David Hansen and athlete Nicole Williams were awarded Blues at the Blues Dinner, with Colours awarded to Alan Nothery (cycling), Col Pratt (rugby) and Rob Smalley (mountaineering).

Controlling the risks of gene technology

Ethics, cloning and health-related applications head the list of community concerns about biotechnology and gene technology, according to a recent survey of public attitudes conducted for Commonwealth Government agency, Biotechnology Australia.

Despite the risks, however, the enormous potential benefits to be gained by gene technology are the subject of research and testing at institutions around the globe (see genetech.csiro.oz.au).

The introduction of a new piece of Commonwealth legislation in June is designed to help realise these benefits whilst minimising the risks. The Gene Technology Act 2000 establishes the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator (www.otgr.gov.au), whose role is to assess risks associated with genetic manipulation. The Regulator also specifies control measures required and monitors the conduct of research work to ensure that the conditions are met. The Act (and the accompanying Gene Technology Regulations 2001) details the type of work that can be undertaken and the containment conditions that must be adopted.

The legislation was subjected to wide-ranging community consultation during its drafting and passage through Parliament and the resulting regulatory system is thought to be an example of international best practice.

The legislation covers the handling of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) and creates a public record of all higher-risk activities (available from the Regulator’s web site). The issue of foods derived from genetically modified plants and animals remains the responsibility of the Australia New Zealand Food Authority (www.anzfa.gov.au).

Gene technology plays an important part of the research efforts at the University. For example, it is being used to develop an understanding of how viruses work and how plants reproduce. It is also being used to create new vaccines and better ways of treating and preventing cancer.

Compliance with the legislation will be a requirement of bodies that fund research making use of gene technology. The Regulator has accredited the University to undertake existing and new projects. This will be the subject of ongoing review. At a local level, assessment and monitoring are undertaken by the University’s Institutional Biosafety Committee. Because they are conducted in certified facilities, the University’s dealings with GMOs present very low risks to both the health of people undertaking them and to the environment.

It is impossible to predict all of the health, environmental, economic or social consequences of this technology. However, the new regulatory scheme, which invokes a transparent risk assessment process, allows researchers to continue exploring developments in the area in confidence.

Further information about biotechnology and gene technology can be obtained from the Biotechnology Australia site (www.biotechnology.gov.au).
Cultural Awakenings Festival

The University celebrated its cultural diversity with the Cultural Awakenings Festival held on the Callaghan Campus from August 20 to 25.

An annual event organised by students with support from the University Union, the Festival provides an opportunity for the University's international students, represented by various groups, clubs and societies, to demonstrate their cultures.

From the opening ceremony when staff and students joined in traditional Aboriginal dances, to the United Games and the celebration party that concluded the festivities on Saturday, the campus was filled with exotic sounds, sights and smells. Activities included a National Food Festival, world music concerts, workshops, films, displays and performances.

Vice-Chancellor Roger Holmes, speaking during the festival, said that the University values its international students highly.

"We are fortunate that students travel from all over the world to study at the University," he said. "The interaction between Australian and international students in classes and social activities is a fundamental part of our campus life. Students who have studied here over the years have made, and continue to make, an important contribution to the University’s goal of internationalisation."

The Cultural Awakenings Festival has been promoting diversity on campus since it began in 1994.