Vice-Chancellor's Column

Reform on agenda in higher education sector

"This is your chance to influence ... a Federal Minister and staff of the Federal Department for Education, Science and Training, who are engaging the sector at a substantial level."

September edition

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Senior Lecturer in Composition Colin Spies performs a work by student Bradley Posselt in the Critical Mass concert as part of the Conservatorium Music Festival. Story on p10. Photograph by Chris Patterson

There have been seven ‘Crossroads’ discussion papers released by the Federal Minister for Education, Science and Training, Dr Brendan Nelson, which are accessible on the DEST website www.dest.gov.au/crossroads:

1. Higher Education at the Crossroads: Overview of the Sector;
2. Striving for Quality: Learning, Teaching and Scholarship;
3. Varieties of Excellence: Diversity, Specialisation and Regional Engagement;
5. Achieving Equitable and Appropriate Outcomes;
6. Meeting the Challenges: the Governance and Management of Universities; and

The papers have a number of consistent themes, such as valuing the diversity and achievements of Australian universities; seeking improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of the sector; exploring prospects for a higher level of specialisation in teaching, research and training among universities; enhancing the finances of the sector, with a focus on increasing student contributions through income contingent loans; improving prospects for major equity groups, including indigenous Australians; improving management, 'cutting red tape' and addressing overlapping requirements of State and Federal Governments and related agencies; criticism of the current industrial relations and 'pattern bargaining' arrangements; improving the governance of Australian universities; and improving the articulation arrangements between higher education and vocational education and training.

It is readily apparent that the Minister is committed to achieving substantial reform of the sector within a very short time frame, given his stated timetable of taking forward to the Federal Cabinet later this year, proposals which may be included as part of the 2002/2003 budget cycle.

Australian Vice-Chancellors (through the AVCC) have undertaken a cooperative approach with the Minister and DEST, particularly with the Secretary of the Department, Dr Peter Shergold and his staff, and we are hopeful for ongoing consultation and exchange. The AVCC has advised of its preferred framework for introducing change to the sector, based on eight key elements:

- Shifting from a rigid target for student places to a range, funded at appropriate student rates;
- Appropriate funding for quality of learning, teaching and scholarship;
- Support for enrolled students from under-represented groups;
- Further investment in research and infrastructure;
- Capacity for universities to access additional income through the option of student fees, with students to access income contingent loans from Government;
- Greater participation in the international education market;
- Support for universities’ engagement with their communities, with a wide range of funding options; and
- National priorities to be developed through inclusive consultations.

My own submissions to the Crossroads Review have focused mainly on the future financing of higher education in Australia. In collaboration with Michael Scamer, Lecturer in taxation within the Faculty of Business and Law, we have recommended that major taxation reform be undertaken in support of a higher level of bequests and donations to universities (submission 28).

A second submission will argue for a set of principles in any consideration for a ‘new’ funding model for Australian higher education, which should start with a commitment of substantial additional public funding for the sector, a model providing financial sustainability and predictability over a rolling triennial basis, and ensuring that the capacity to pay up-front fees is not a major determining factor for domestic students, particularly for undergraduate fees.

I hope that many of you will collectively and individually, if you have the time, put forward your ideas about the sector. This is your chance to influence Federal Government opinion and a Federal Minister and staff of the Federal Department for Education, Science and Training, who are engaging the sector at a substantial level.

Roger S Holmes
Vice-Chancellor and President
University Choir wins again

The University of Newcastle Chamber Choir has won Australia’s leading choral competition for the second year in a row:

Sixteen choirs from around Australia and from New Zealand competed in the GIO Awards for Choirs as part of the McDonalds Performing Arts Challenge at the Sydney Town Hall last month.

It is the first time that a choir has won the competition in consecutive years.

The adjudicators described the University Choir as a beautifully trained and professional choir of outstanding ability, that sings with a sense of real understanding and musicality.

The choir under the direction of Philip Matthias also won the City of Sydney Chamber Choir Award and the Australian Choral Award this year, winning both competitions for the second consecutive year as well.

The repertoire for the choir’s winning performance in the GIO Awards was nearly all Australian music, including a recent work by choir member Gordon Hamilton, entitled Brave Ned Kelly.

Earlier this year the choir performed in the UK and France including Westminster Abbey, St. Paul’s Cathedral, and Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, where they received a standing ovation from an audience of 3,000. The Choir performed as part of the Guild of Church Musicians conference in London, and undertook live broadcasts for BBC Radio. A double CD of sacred music and single CD of secular music will result from the tour. The Choir has to its credit two other CDs “Vision” and “Journey of Celebration”.

The choir will be guests at the opening of Wesley Music Centre in Canberra this month and will perform at the Australian National Choral Association conference in Brisbane next month.

The Great Australian Brain Robbery

The Hon Justice Marcus Einfeld AO QC will deliver the University’s Annual Human Rights/Social Justice lecture on the timely topic of refugees and asylum seekers, on September 19.

His lecture is entitled, “The Great Australian Brain Robbery; The Hijacking of the Australian Conscience.” Justice Einfeld will tackle the issues of asylum seekers’ rights and what our responsibilities are to them, both morally and legally.

And what of the children of asylum seekers? Can they legally be kept in detention? In what sort of conditions and for what length?

“The conscience and morality of Australia is in virtual free fall,” says Justice Einfeld. “This is a fight for the rediscovery of our nation’s soul.”

He says he is not surprised at opinion polls that show we are against admitting asylum seekers and refugees. Australians have had a fortress mentality regarding immigration since the goldrush days and the current mood is no different, he said. His lecture will consider if our treatment of asylum seekers is harsh and whether too many avenues of appeal simply lengthen the pain.

Justice Einfeld was the foundation president of the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission in 1986. He is the President of the Australian Legal Resources International (ALRI) a non profit, independent corporation of judges and lawyers supporting democracy, human rights and the rule of law in developing countries and emerging democracies, which works in about 20 countries.

The Human Rights/Social Justice Lecture will be at 1 pm at the Richardson Theatre. It is a free public event. For further information contact Marie Dunn on 4921-6370.

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Research team explores F-111 health fears

A team of University researchers will undertake a national study into possible adverse effects on the health of Royal Australian Air Force personnel as a result of maintenance to the fuel tanks of F-111 aircraft.

A multidisciplinary team of researchers will work through the University of Newcastle Research Associates (TUNRA) on the Health and Aircraft Maintenance Study, which was commissioned by the Commonwealth Department of Veterans' Affairs and the Repatriation Commission.

Chief Executive Officer for TUNRA Dr Soozy Smith said the study has been initiated in response to anecdotal evidence that F-111 workers had suffered adverse health effects from work on the aircraft's fuel tanks.

The F-111 was designed to fly long distances at high speed. In order to allow them to carry large amounts of fuel under extreme conditions, the aircraft has numerous fuel tanks of varying sizes, with sealant between overlapping metal surfaces to prevent leakage. As the sealant deteriorated over time, it was necessary to remove and replace it. Four different desal/reseal programs were conducted in Australia from the early 1980s until today.

The researchers will carry out an epidemiological study looking at various areas of interest including mortality, cancer incidence, multiple sclerosis, motor neurone disease, abnormalities of general health, neuro-physical problems, genetic effects, fertility problems, and genetic effects as indicated by congenital abnormalities and cancer in children.

Researchers from TUNRA's NewStat and Hunter Occupational Health divisions, and from the Hunter Medical Research Institute will conduct a series of sub-studies to consider health outcomes on F-111 personnel and on a comparison group. Work has begun on the first of three phases in the project — an extensive literature review to assess evidence of relationships between exposures and outcomes, potential confounders and effect modifiers, possible bio-markers for exposure and to obtain the best measures available for exposures and outcomes.

A second component of Phase 1 will be a small scale qualitative study involving personnel associated with the various fuel tank maintenance programs. This will form the definition of exposed and comparison cohorts for the study.

"TUNRA has past experience in occupational health studies," Soozy said. "The University has a broad range of excellent researchers who are able to effectively combine on this sort of cooperative project."

TUNRA is the commercial arm of the University and was established in 1969. Some of the services carried out by TUNRA include managing and commercialising the University's intellectual property; protecting inventions with patents; seeking industry partnerships and investors; and managing research projects. It is self supporting, employs more than 50 staff in TUNRA Corporate or its divisions and last year turned over $7.3 million.

TUNRA's role is to assist commerce, industry and the community by providing a gateway to the academic and professional staff of the University. TUNRA also provides administrative and accounting support for its divisions and their staff, as well as the academic and professional officers who consult through it.

One exciting initiative recently developed by TUNRA is a new tender search service. This service is designed to more effectively link the expertise of the University with industry and government bodies. To make use of this service, please complete the registration form on the facing page and return it to TUNRA.

Biomedical researchers win UK grant

The Wellcome Trust UK, one of the world's largest supporters of biomedical research, has awarded $473,000 to a team of five researchers from the Hunter Medical Research Institute.

The team based at the University's School of Biomedical Sciences will investigate the cellular signaling mechanisms that underlie diseases such as Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, asthma and cancer.

The successful applicants, Associate Professor Alistair Sim and Professors Peter Dunkley, John Rostas, Rodney Scott and Leonie Ashman, will use the grant to purchase a state of the art mass spectrometer for the rapid identification and characterisation of proteins.

"This grant will allow our researchers to remain at the cutting edge of biomedical research," Deputy Head of the School Associate Professor Alistair Sim said. "The success of the funding application is testimony to the international standing and cooperative nature of biomedical research in the Hunter."

Alistair said that with the human genome now sequenced, research attention has turned towards characterising the human proteome. The proteome is the entire complement of proteins expressed by the genome in a cell or tissue type at a given time for a particular disease state or environmental condition.

"This field of proteomics has become one of the premiere strategies in identifying targets for new drug design," he said. "It requires rapid and accurate identification of up to hundreds of proteins from very small amounts of sample. This can now be achieved in minutes with the new instrument."

The equipment will expand existing infrastructure in the University's Biomolecular Research Facility and will support the biomedical research activities of the Hunter Medical Research Institute, providing comprehensive proteome analysis services to the region.
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Research focus

“Things we are doing now in the laboratory may not have any influence for 15 years. I don’t get my rewards from seeing the clinical outcomes of my work but from understanding the science behind it.”

It is no accident that the Head of the School of Biomedical Sciences Professor Mike Calford has a door leading from his office into a research laboratory.

Research is a high priority for Mike, who came to the University two years ago to take up a Chair in Human Physiology. It’s also a high priority for his School.

“We have one degree of our own – the Bachelor of Biomedical Science – which enrolls about 40 students a year,” Mike explains. “We teach around 1600 students a year, however, who are enrolled in other degrees. I think we do that well and we’re keen to continue doing it well. But there is no doubt that research is the main focus of the School.”

The courses taught by the School, including physiology, anatomy, pharmacology and biochemistry, are the basic building blocks for a range of medical and medical science programs. The School teaches into 14 degrees. Students of Biomedical Science often go on to a career in research and graduates are in strong demand in biotechnology and biopharmaceutical fields. The degree also provides a good background for students wanting to proceed to study medicine.

The School attracted $6.3 million in research grants this year – its best performance since it was formed in 1998. Six disciplines combined to create the School – Anatomy, Anatomical Pathology, Human Physiology, Immunology and Microbiology, Medical Biochemistry, and Medical Genetics – but Mike says that the School’s major research interests are collaborative and concentrate in three areas:

- neuroscience,
- cell biology/cancer biology, and
- immunology.

“People from all the former disciplines interact across those broad areas,” Mike said. “Over the last five years there have been major appointments made in the areas of genetics, immunology, cell biology and neuroscience and these have boosted the research profile of the School.”

The School’s research efforts had also been boosted by the formation of the Hunter Medical Research Institute (HMRI) which provides a means for researchers to interact more easily with clinical groups, including asthma and mental health research groups.

Mike’s own principle research area is on the mechanism by which the brain undergoes plasticity, or change. Adaptations by cells of the brain may take place in response to injury or stroke and Mike works with animal models to look at the basic mechanisms involved in these changes. He has worked in this area since 1985, and brain plasticity work he collaborated on in 1988 will see its influence in clinical trials this year at the University of Adelaide.

“That is indicative of the lag between basic research and application in humans,” he said. “Things we are doing now in the laboratory may not have any influence for 15 years. I don’t get my rewards from seeing the clinical outcomes of my work but from understanding the science behind it.”

Mike Calford was born in Wales but has lived in Australia since 1965. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science with first class honours in Psychology from Monash University. After a short stint as a clinical psychologist working with schizophrenic outpatients, Mike returned to Monash to do a psychology doctorate. Since completing his PhD in 1982, he has had a series of research fellowships including a Queen Elizabeth II Fellowship. He has carried out research at the University of Queensland and the Australian National University (ANU), as well as overseas at Oxford and at the City University of New York. In 1991, he was awarded the inaugural Australian Medical Research Award by the Australian Society for Medical Research.

Mike came to Newcastle from ANU, where he was Head of the Psychobiology Laboratory. He was drawn to the University by the security of a Chair and by the opportunity to work in a faculty with both clinical and basic researchers.

“After 20 years on grant funding, it was time to settle down,” said Mike, who is married and has three children. “My research is still the most important thing, however, and the neuroscience group here has a high profile. There are clear advantages to being in the Faculty of Health in terms of collaboration.”
Communicating the science message

Head of the School of Mathematical and Physical Sciences Associate Professor John O'Connor is a physicist who believes in the power of communication.

In fact honing his communication skills is a priority for him and forms a key part of his approach to research and administration.

"If you want to get things done in any area, it's important to work cooperatively with others," John says. "To do that effectively, I need to maintain my negotiation and communication skills across a broad range of areas including dealings with students, my colleagues and the public."

There is no doubt that John goes that extra mile when it comes to communicating the things he is passionate about. He is particularly interested in science communication and was recognised for his skills in this area when he, along with Bob Nelson and Terry Buras, was short listed for a Eureka Science Award for Science Communication in 2001. Newcastle's science communication activities include the Science Maths and Real Technology (SMART) program, the Science and Engineering Challenge and the local chapter of the Australian Science Communicators. This package of science promotion activities won an award this year from the UK Institute of Physics.

"Science is all around us," John said. "We can't avoid it but it shouldn't be scary and I want to get that message across."

John says the SMART program, which involves undergraduate students trained in science communication skills taking science and technology based shows to primary and high schools, has doubled each year for the past four years. As well as convincing school students that science can be fun and interesting, it has had an added benefit for the undergraduate student presenters.

"Their communication skills improve, they come back with positive feelings about what they've achieved and they increase their understanding of the importance of what they are studying."

John would like to see an undergraduate Bachelor of Science (Communication) degree developed at Newcastle and says that researchers and scientists who completed such a course would have an advantage over their peers.

"They would come out as physicists, chemists or biologists well trained in communicating to the public what they do. It would give them a real edge also in terms of applying for research funding."

John practices what he preaches. He has programs on local radio stations 2NUR-FM and 2NC and is on the Board of influential umbrella group the Federation of Australian Scientific and Technological Societies. This lobby group is responsible for the annual Science Meets Parliament day as well as playing a part in the backing Australia's Ability policy and the establishment of a number of science and technology fellowships in Australia.

As President of the Australian Institute of Physics last year and again this year, John has been responsible for totally revamping the society. Under his leadership, it has increased its benefits to members and raised its public profile. He has toured the country seeking the consensus of branch members for future directions, better use of resources and better services. During the past 12 months, he also served on an Australian Research Council selection panel during a time when its processes were completely overhauled and new methods introduced.

John was born in Newcastle and went to high school in Maitland. He did his Bachelor of Science at the Australian National University, majoring in mathematics and physics, as well as his PhD. After two years of postdoctoral research at the University of Sussex in the UK, John returned to Newcastle to fill a lecturers position in 1981 and has been here ever since. In 1999 he was awarded a DSc from the ANU recognising a career of research achievements.

He says that the combination of mathematics, physics and statistics in the new School is effective. Research is the cement that holds the School together, with strong research groups and some outstanding people at the top of their fields in all three areas. A challenge lies in making money although John is quick to see opportunities.

"Physics has the photonics degree and we are exploring the possibility of offering it into the PSB (Productivity Standards Board) program in Singapore. We already have maths courses being taught in Singapore and statistics also offers a lot of promise in that program."

"Statistics are also looking at developing a web-based subject cross-linked to other universities and overseas institutions. As well as attracting credits to the University through the students online, it has the potential to attract students to the University's programs, particularly postgraduate studies."

John teaches two undergraduate courses and maintains an interest in his research area - surface physics and nanotechnology - although he has to leave a lot of the experimentation to his PhD students. He has had plenty of experience as an administrator, having been head of the former Physics Department for seven years. One of the first things he has done as Head of School is ensure that the general staff cycle through the different areas in the Mathematics and Physics Buildings in order to meet everyone and work with each other. He sees opportunities to collaborate with areas in the new Faculty of Science and Information Technology, especially with Communication.

"There is still a great deal of confusion and disarray as the old rule books are torn up and the new ones are still being written," he said. "We are able to continue successfully because of the goodwill of staff, who are working under difficult conditions."
As children, many of us were scared to death of the witch in our bedtime stories – an evil presence to act as a spacy foil to sugary fables.

But witches don't just feature in children's stories. They are also depicted in literature and art. And it's these representations that have inspired Dr Marguerite Johnson, lecturer in Classics at the Ourimbah campus, to conduct research into the history and depiction of witches through the ages.

Marguerite's research has attracted a lot of attention. She has made presentations at several forums including the International Medieval Conference held at the University of Western Michigan and more recently at the University of Adelaide. The American conference was an event on a grand scale over five days with 3,000 attendees and 600 papers presented.

"It was an incredible experience, with a mixture of academics from across very diverse fields of interest. There was so much going on, it was impossible to attend everything," she said. "My Adelaide presentation was entitled 'The Witch through the Ages' and focussed on representations of witches in art from ancient times to the 20th century."

But how does an historian become interested in witchcraft?

"Quite easily," she says. "I am an historian and I am interested in witchcraft from an historical point of view."

Although she describes herself as spiritual rather than 'witchy', Marguerite enjoys the companionship of a 13 year-old black cat named Remus. She found that references to witches kept cropping up while she was researching representations of women in ancient literature and that medieval persecution booklets borrowed from ancient Greek and Roman literature.

"The 'persecution booklets' were handy guides to inquisition and torture procedures and laid out guidelines to identify witches, what they looked like, what questions to ask and how to torture them," she said. "Women who were unfortunate enough to be labelled as witches fared worst in medieval times. It is estimated that around 40,000 people died in Britain and Europe (particularly from around 1550 to 1630) as a result of torture, of which 90 percent were women."

With the Church trying to establish its power during these unsettled times, Marguerite says women were kept in controlled roles and could be branded as witches for the most mundane of reasons, such as using commonly known herbal remedies for illnesses and injuries.

"These were seen as a form of Satanism and in line with Christian beliefs, needed to kept down at all costs. Women from all levels of society were persecuted, although mostly the lower classes suffered."

Marguerite's research was enhanced by a stint at the University of Glasgow last year, where she was able to refer to a very rare collection on witchcraft and magic, 'The Ferguson Collection'. The collection presented her with a remarkable body of information about her subject but her study of witches does not stop there. She has been invited to present a paper about the Greek sorceress Medea and her representation in literature and film at a conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico next February.

No déja vu for new Warden

It will be second time around for Emeritus Professor Ken Dutton, who succeeded Jill Scott as Warden of Convocation on September 1.

Ken was Warden from 1974-6 and also became President of the Australian University Graduate Conference. But Ken, who was Professor of French from 1969 to 1998 and who administers the Hartley Bequest Program, says it won't be a case of déja vu.

"The University of those days is scarcely recognisable in the University of today," he said. "The times have changed and Convocation has changed with them."

Ken says that Convocation has a vital role to play in maintaining Newcastle's position in the array of universities bidding for the best students.

"The University of Newcastle offers a quality of education comparable with – even in some respects superior to – that of its metropolitan counterparts," he said.

He is keen to build on the alumni groups that exist in Australia and overseas, saying their role, as ambassadors for Newcastle and in assisting recent graduates to find employment, is a valuable resource.

Ken was Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University from 1981-7, and Pro Vice-Chancellor and Dean of Students from 1988-93. A graduate of the University of Sydney, he is a Fellow of the Australian College of Educators and in 1997 was awarded the City of Paris Medal. He has written 15 books, with his most recent – a biography of his former Professor at the University of Sydney – launched by Sydney's acting Vice-Chancellor Ken Ellis in July.

"It was a great feeling to see Newcastle acknowledged as a respected sister institution at Australia's oldest university," Ken said. "When one looks at realities and not simply media images, Newcastle comes out very well by comparison with older metropolitan institutions."

As well as his writing – he has written three books since his retirement – Ken is actively involved in the Anglican diocese of Newcastle as an Examining Chaplain and a member of Synod.
Newcastle cancer researcher becomes a Fulbright fellow

Nursing lecturer Dr Margaret Harris has been awarded a prestigious scholarships, the Fulbright Postdoctoral Fellow Award.

The Scholarship allows recipients to study in the United States and Margaret will continue her postdoctoral studies in the Cancer Research Centre at the University of Hawaii assisting in a study investigating colon cancer risk counselling for at-risk relatives.

Margaret says the award will give her the opportunity to interact and collaborate with a transdisciplinary group of researchers on a designated project.

“It will provide me with a unique opportunity to share and improve my current skills and provide opportunities for future international research collaboration,” she said.

Salary packaging options

University employees have a range of salary packaging benefits available to them. Participation in salary packaging is voluntary and the University offers a range of benefits that allows you to choose the mix that is most suitable.

The arrangements include concessional items - additional superannuation contributions and novated motor vehicle leasing - and fringe benefit exempt items - in-house child care and laptop or notebook computers. At least 50 percent of your package must be taken as salary.

Remuneration Consultant Eric Burns says the concessional items are the most attractive in the salary package.

“Additional superannuation contributions can be an excellent means of building additional wealth on a tax-favoured basis. For employees getting closer to retirement it allows you to maximise your retirement benefit through additional contributions to your existing University fund, or to build an alternative investment portfolio.”

Eric says that staff considering buying a new motor vehicle might be able to lower the overall cost of running it under a novated lease. Under a novated lease, an employee leases a motor vehicle from a financier and the University makes the payments. The University collects the payments to cover the lease and the running costs of the car from your salary before tax. Fringe Benefit Tax is calculated using a formula based on kilometres travelled each year.

“Normally additional superannuation payments and the purchase of a motor vehicle don’t provide any tax advantage but salary packaging allows you to factor a tax benefit into your overall financial planning structure.”

The University recommends that staff seek financial advice before undertaking salary packaging. Information is available on the website at www.newcastle.edu.au/oldsite/services/oust/hrm/salpack/index.htm

Contact Eric Burns, Authorised Representative of Associated Planners, on (02) 4942 1455.
The 2002 Conservatorium Music Festival hit the high notes last month with a range of concerts and workshops for lovers of all sorts of music. Thousands attended the 'Making Connections' Festival between August 18 and 23. Concert Manager Philip Sketchley said this year's festival offered something for everyone. "People were able to experience a program of orchestral, choral and chamber music, ensembles and opera, instrumental and vocal recitals," he said. "The festival is quite diverse and aims to make connections with performers, composers, educators, students, ensembles, children and music lovers generally." Highlights included a Celebration Youth Concert featuring specially written mini-concertos for young people; 'Carnivale' by Chacona in the Newcastle Region Art Gallery with festive music from Venice and Spain; a Children's Prom Concert that took a journey through memorable movie music for children between six and 12 years old; and Critical Mass, a concert demonstrating new works written by Conservatorium students.

1. Lucinda Moon from leading baroque ensemble chacona performs at the Regional Art Gallery
2. The University Wind Orchestra accompany Carl Caulfield's narration at a Children's Prom performance of the Loaded Dog
3. Colin Spiers plays new work by composition students
something old, something new

Katrina last year won the Music Lover’s Prize for Composition for her Life Cycle for chamber orchestra, which she wrote in 2000.

“It’s so important for student composers to hear their own work performed,” Katrina said.

“The rehearsals and workshops are crucial to help you learn and I have already made changes to the opera as a result of rehearsing.”

Katrina, who began learning piano at around 10 years of age, became interested in composing during her final year at Duval High School in the northern NSW town of Armidale. While studying drama for her Higher School Certificate, she composed music as part of an annual statewide Shakespeare Festival.

“I loved drama and I think that’s where my love of dramatic writing came from. My mum plays the piano and my dad loves classical music, so I grew up with lots of music.”

Katrina wrote pieces for the piano during Year 12 but really took to composing during her undergraduate studies with teacher Colin Spiers at the Conservatorium.

“Colin is a fantastic teacher and stressed that for each hour spent writing music, we should spend at least that listening to other composers,” Katrina said.

“I threw away the piano and majored in composing.”

Although she says that you can learn techniques that assist in composing, you do need inspiration. She says Bartok and Debussy are two composers whose music has influenced her.

“Something old, something new” will be performed from October 3 to 6 in the Exhibition Space at University House. Enquiries to Philip Sketchley on 492 18905.

The world premiere of an opera written by a Newcastle student will take place next month as part of “Something old, something new” — a special event celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Conservatorium and the international conference of the Musicological Society of Australia.

Katrina Pring wrote the four scene opera, Daphne, as part of her Honours studies in the Bachelor of Music. Daphne tells the story of the young huntress who spurned Apollo’s advances and escaped from his amorous pursuit by begging her father to transform her into a tree.

Associate Professor of Music and Drama Michael Ewans, who wrote the libretto says Katrina’s Daphne is the first opera by a current student ever to have been performed at an Australian conservatorium.

“Katrina’s music is remarkable,” he said.

“Daphne is a powerful and lyrical score, and we are sure that audiences will enjoy Katrina’s music as much as the cast who are rehearsing for the premiere.”

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“I’m lucky because a lot of young composers struggle to find their unique voice and I’ve never had any problem writing in my own style.”

Katrina is one of four composers who have been commissioned by Orchestra Nova to write orchestral pieces for performance next year. She plans to take a year off at the completion of her Honours studies before deciding what to do next.

The role of Daphne will be played by Sarah Legge, with guest artist Marcus Rivera as Apollo, Master of Creative Arts student Tara Williams as Aphrodite, and Honours students Anthea Craig and Julia County as Eros and principal nymph.

Daphne will be performed as part of “Something old, something new”, with two Scarlatti sonatas, which were recently discovered by Marie-Louise Catsalls in Paris. The Conservatorium will present the first performances of these works since his lifetime, from her new performing edition.

The Prologo 'Fedra, Idolatria e Furor' (Faith, Idolatry and Fury) is an allegory of the coming of Christianity to Rome. The Intermedio 'The Rape of Proserpina' retells the famous story of Proserpina's abduction by Pluto. Both of these short operas are filled with beautiful and passionate arias and duets.

With musical direction by Marie-Louise and stage direction by Michael Ewans, the performance will feature Ben Mingjoy, Sharon Allen, Anna Sandstrom, Emma Pratt and Elizabeth Smyth.

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Associate Professor of Music and Drama Michael Ewans, who wrote the libretto says Katrina’s Daphne is the first opera by a current student ever to have been performed at an Australian conservatorium.

“Katrina’s music is remarkable,” he said.

“Daphne is a powerful and lyrical score, and we are sure that audiences will enjoy Katrina’s music as much as the cast who are rehearsing for the premiere.”

“I’m lucky because a lot of young composers struggle to find their unique voice and I’ve never had any problem writing in my own style.”

Katrina is one of four composers who have been commissioned by Orchestra Nova to write orchestral pieces for performance next year. She plans to take a year off at the completion of her Honours studies before deciding what to do next.

The role of Daphne will be played by Sarah Legge, with guest artist Marcus Rivera as Apollo, Master of Creative Arts student Tara Williams as Aphrodite, and Honours students Anthea Craig and Julia County as Eros and principal nymph.

Daphne will be performed as part of “Something old, something new”, with two Scarlatti sonatas, which were recently discovered by Marie-Louise Catsalls in Paris. The Conservatorium will present the first performances of these works since his lifetime, from her new performing edition.

The Prolego 'Fedra, Idolatria e Furor' (Faith, Idolatry and Fury) is an allegory of the coming of Christianity to Rome. The Intermedio 'The Rape of Proserpina' retells the famous story of Proserpina's abduction by Pluto. Both of these short operas are filled with beautiful and passionate arias and duets.

With musical direction by Marie-Louise and stage direction by Michael Ewans, the performance will feature Ben Mingjoy, Sharon Allen, Anna Sandstrom, Emma Pratt and Elizabeth Smyth.

“Something old, something new” will be performed from October 3 to 6 in the Exhibition Space at University House. Enquiries to Philip Sketchley on 492 18905.
International research shines light on Japanese unemployment

Researchers in the University's Centre of Full Employment and Equity (CofFEE) are taking part in a collaborative research project with Japanese and American researchers to explain unemployement rates in the three countries.

The comparative study aims to discover the best way to reduce Australia's unemployment rates. Professor Bill Mitchell, who is carrying out the research with CofFEE colleagues Dr Martin Watts and Dr John Burgess, says that US unemployment rates were consistently lower than Australia's during the 1990s, prompting policy analysts to suggest that adopting the very deregulated US economic model would lower unemployment here.

"Japan presents a very different model to Australia and the USA," he said. "They traditionally have low unemployment rates as a result of tight regulation of the economy and public sector intervention. This study sets up a research tension that asks why shouldn't we follow the Japanese model and is there more to unemployment figures than meets the eye?"

Bill says that in previous decades there was a relationship between economic growth and reducing inequality and poverty. The opposite was true of the 90s, he says, when employment opportunities for low wage and unskilled workers declined relative to high wage earners in Australia. Poverty indicators have shifted, with today's poor typically young and unemployed or under-employed, whereas in the past the poor were likely to be old and own their own home - a post-labour problem. He says the US has shifted poverty away from the unemployed to working poor by forcing people into low wage service sector jobs.

"There is not much known about Japan however," Bill said. "Our co-researchers indicate that the system of lifetime employment is breaking down in Japan."

Previously, there was a complex network of firms related through share ownership and distributed regionally. If one had trouble using workers, they would be moved elsewhere. In this way they maintained lifetime employment. In addition, whenever private employment fell, the public sector would turn on a major project like highway development to soak up unemployment.

Bill says that when demand was strong, Japanese manufacturing strength was built on exports. During the 1990s, however, Japan's export markets came under attack from newly industrialised countries including South Korea, Malaysia and Taiwan. With pressure on exports, the ability of firms to absorb workers was reduced and many were sacked.

CofFEE's research traced the dynamics of change and why it occurred, as well as how it is manifesting in Japan. The cultural attitudes to welfare and work are very different to the Australian and US models, which have much in common. The researchers found it difficult to get a handle on the extent of the unemployment problem in Japan because they are reluctant to admit to it.

"Male breadwinners who have lost their jobs are dropping out of the system, with many of them leaving their families and going to live in growing tent villages in parks, where they are cared for by religious groups."

One outcome of the research project will be the development of an electronic database of Japanese labour force and unemployment data.

"Ellen Carlson from CofFEE had 10 years of experience at senior levels in the OECD and knows a lot of senior people in national agencies in Japan," Bill explained. "Last year her contacts yielded a huge box of data that provides the University with the best labour force and unemployment breakdown data that exists - certainly in Australia and possibly in the world. Thanks to her efforts, we are now building a phenomenal electronic database that we will share with others via the CofFEE website."

The CofFEE researchers are collaborating with researchers at Japan's Ehime University and the Universities of Missouri and California in the USA. The Japanese co-researchers will visit Newcastle for 12 months as part of the study. The three-year Australian Research Council funded project, which has a year to run, resulted in a workshop last December to report on the outcomes to date. Martin, John and Bill will produce their final report in a book planned for publication in late 2003 or early 2004.

Drought relief not likely until next year

Newcastle researchers say drought affected farmers in eastern Australia may have to wait until March or April next year before they get significant rainfall.

Dr Stewart Franks and Anthony Kiem of the University's Environmental Engineering Group have developed a technique based on a new index of El Nino activity to monitor climate variability. Using this technique they issued a high probability warning of the current El Nino event as early as September last year. The prospects for continued drought conditions are very high, according to Stewart.

"The El Nino is only expected to reach its maximum strength around December," he said. "What we are seeing now is very similar to 1964/5, when the 1964 drought was extended by an El Nino effect, which carried the dry conditions into an extreme drought the following year."

The current situation and the strengthening El Nino are likely to lead to an extreme fire risk across the eastern part of Australia this summer and the researchers hope that making people aware of the dangers may lead them to take preventative steps now.

"Droughts and floods are part of the natural climate variability of Australia," Steward said, "but we hope lessons can be learned from the experiences."

Stewart says there are a number of structural and non-structural approaches to achieve greater tolerance to droughts, which should be a priority if Australia is to maintain agricultural output and support rural communities.
Scientists find lead 'tricks' nerve cells

Biomedical research at the University has led to the discovery of the way in which lead affects the human nervous system.

Dr Perry Hartfield and Professor Peter Dunkley from the School of Biomedical Sciences have collaborated with Brazilian researcher Dr Rodrigo Leal on research investigating how lead activates biochemical 'signalling pathways' in human nerve cells. They have found that it activates a 'stress pathway' in the cells, a process which repairs damaged cells.

It has long been established that high blood lead levels can affect a person's cognitive ability but this is the first time that scientists have observed and documented lead affecting cells in this way. The researchers used human nerve cells in laboratory experiments to show how lead, which is a toxin, is taken up by the nervous system by tricking the cells into thinking it is a molecule of calcium, an element normally found in the body. Lead enters the body through pollutants in the atmosphere, is absorbed into the bloodstream, travels through the body and easily enters the brain, where it accumulates and impacts on the central nervous system.

"The similarities in the structures of lead and calcium mean that lead is able to inappropriately activate calcium response enzymes," Peter said. "Although small amounts of lead are found in all of our bodies, it is not required for any normal functions of cells. It tricks the cell into thinking it is calcium. More importantly, lead is toxic and particularly affects the developing nervous system in young children."

Elevated blood lead levels of more than 10 micrograms per 100mls of blood can result in deficiencies in cognitive ability, behavioural problems and a loss of IQ in the long term. In 1996, a National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) study showed that 7.3 percent of Australian children had elevated blood lead levels.

For years it has been known that lead has a toxic effect on young people but it was not known exactly how it was activated. The discovery of this new stress response unlocks part of that mystery. It also poses more questions about the effect of lead in children.

"We want to know what happens when a cell is exposed to lead over a prolonged time," Peter said.

The researchers suspect that lead exposure will predispose nerve cells to a premature death, a process known as apoptosis, which could be linked to cognitive damage in children. The original research, funded by a $26,000 Hunter Medical Research Institute grant and undertaken in the Faculty of Health, has been published in the international scientific journal Toxicology and Applied Pharmacology.

The team has applied for a NHMRC grant to further research the effects of lead on the central nervous system and the development of the brain. They want to test their theories by looking at the effects of lead in the brain cells of rats.

University researchers awarded $10,000

Two Newcastle researchers were awarded the prestigious Sherman Eureka Prize for Environmental Research in Sydney last month.

Associate Professor Eric Kennedy and Associate Professor Bogdan Dlugogorski from the School of Engineering received the $10,000 cash prize for their innovative research into ozone-depleting substances (ODS).

"We found that chemicals known as ODS, while not being used any more, were being stored until they could be destroyed through a very energy intensive and often pollutant forming process," Eric said. "The ODS are a major problem as they are contributing to the Antarctic ozone hole which is allowing ultraviolet rays to creep in and the inhabitants of Australia, Chile and Argentina are being affected. By depleting the ozone layer, ODS can cause numerous health problems such as cataracts and skin cancer."

The researchers have developed a process to convert the ODS, such as halons and CFCs, using an energy efficient technique which results in environmentally benign compounds that can be reused. The process, called Hydrodehalogenation, took five years to develop and the researchers are now looking at ways to commercialise it. The Sherman Eureka Prize for Environmental Research is awarded for research leading to the resolution of an environmental problem or the improvement of the natural environment.
People & Places

Finalists compete in Super Challenge Series

Airships flew in Newcastle last month when high school teams competed in the final of the University's Science and Engineering Super Challenge Series.

The Super Challenge Plate and Super Challenge Cup finals were held in August as part of National Science Week. Bob Nelson from the Faculty of Science and Information Technology says the challenges, which involved activities such as students building and flying an airship, were made possible through the $20,000 funding the University secured from the Department of Education, Science and Training to stage the series.

"The Challenge Series attracted over 3400 students from the Hunter, Central Coast, North Coast and the Central West, competing in regional teams since March this year, with the best teams making it to the finals. Mainly Year 10 students from the Hunter area participated in the Newcastle events, with San Clemente, Merewether, Kotara and Warners Bay High Schools qualifying for the Science Week events."

The runner up teams from each region competed for the Super Challenge Plate, while the teams gaining the highest score from each region meeting in the Super Challenge Cup.

"The success of the competition demonstrates the University's international reputation in innovation in science communication," Bob said. "A delegation from the Shanghai Association for Science and Technology visited Newcastle during Science Week to see the teams in action, while Minister for Science Peter McGauran presented the Super Challenge Cup to the winning school."

Over 300 volunteers have been involved in the series including representatives from Rotary International, the Regional Museum, the Institution of Engineers Australia, the Young Scientists of Australia and staff from the University. National Science Week ran across Australia from August 17-25.

Mentoring program aims to boost retention rates

The Triple S program, adapted from one conducted on the Ourimbah campus for the past four years, saw the student mentors work to create a friendly and caring community for enrolling Bachelor of Science students.

Bachelor of Science Program Coordinator Kate Hartig said that over the past five years, up to 11 percent of all commencing students across the University have withdrawn in the first six weeks of first semester.

"The Bachelor of Science has some of the highest attrition rates," Kate said. "Research indicates that although students withdraw for a variety of reasons, overwhelmingly the decision to leave is influenced by feelings of isolation. This mentoring program was aimed at creating a sense of belonging and acceptance."

Contact with mentors began for the science students at Orientation Day, with the 14 volunteers overwhelmed by the attendance of around 140 students at group activities.

"The students who volunteered to become mentors played a critical role in the success of the program," Kate said. "They attended a full-day mentor training workshop and worked extremely hard with their groups during O'Day. Their role is ongoing for the first five weeks of the semester in that they are available to students experiencing difficulties and will offer advice on where to go for further information and assistance."

The mentoring program was supported by the University's counseling service and student service staff, as well as staff from School and Faculty offices. Kate hopes that it will be adopted across the Faculty of Science and IT and perhaps ultimately across the University.

"By enhancing the transitional stages into university life, the mentors are assisting with the retention of new students and encouraging students to continue with and complete their university studies," she said.
Physiotherapy Clinic

Staff and students now have access to a physiotherapy clinic at the Forum Sports and Aquatic Centre.

The University Sports Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation Clinic is a collaborative venture between the Discipline of Physiotherapy in the Faculty of Health and NUSport, and offers the full range of physiotherapy services including injury assessment and management for sport, dance and recreation.

The clinic is run by Rosemary Riley, a physiotherapist with extensive experience treating athletes, dancers and workers in Australia and England. Rosemary has worked in a variety of positions including the 2001 Sydney Olympic Games, the Australian Cats musical, the Australian Institute of Sports, and as club physiotherapist with the Canberra Raiders Rugby League Club.

"The clinic operates like a general physiotherapy practice and is available to everyone, from elite sports people and dancers to people wanting to be able to bend comfortably for gardening or sitting at their desk," she said.

"Our emphasis is on helping people to reach their full physical potential at all levels of activity."

Services offered by the clinic include assessment and treatment of injuries sustained either at work or through dancing, sport or recreation; injury prevention and educational programs; taping, casting and splinting; and back care programs. The clinic will also operate the University’s KinCom apparatus that provides computerised mechanical evaluation and rehabilitation for musculoskeletal injuries and following orthopaedic surgery.

Rosemary says the clinic will provide professional placement for students enrolled in the University's physiotherapy program, offered for the first time this year.

"The clinic is ideally situated alongside a gymnasium in the Forum," Rosemary said. "The gym is well equipped and the equipment is in good order so I can take people and show them directly how to use it. The facilities of the Forum offer so many options, from the pool to classes aimed at different fitness levels, that there is something to suit everyone."

The Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation Clinic is open from 9am to 5pm. To find out more or make an appointment, call 4921 6879 or email health-physio@newcastle.edu.au.

Psychology Week celebrated

The University hosted the first 'Forging Links' Psychology Postgraduate Student Conference at the Industry Development Centre (IDC) last month as part of Psychology Week activities in the Hunter.

Conference organisers and postgraduate students Carmen Atkinson and Alyna Turner said the conference provided the opportunity for higher degree research students to present their work to their peers through oral and poster presentations.

"The conference aimed to establish and strengthen links not only between students and the University, but also the field of psychology and the general community," Carmen said. "Establishing these links within the psychology community is important as larger research groups are encouraged in the new research funding environment."

The conference allowed the University to present research on topics ranging from autism and schizophrenia to the impact of high stress shiftwork on police. Psychology Week was held from August 19-23.

Awards were presented to postgraduate students in the following categories:

- Best Oral Presentation (PhD) - Carmen Atkinson
- Best Oral Presentation (Masters) - Vicky Richards
- Best Oral Presentation (Honours) - Rebecca Atkins
- Best Poster Presentation - Rebekkah Atkinson

Prize winners and the Forging Links Organising Committee - (L-R) Alyna Turner, Rebekkah Atkinson, Rebecca Atkins, Head of the School of Behavioural Sciences Pat Mchle, Carmen Atkinson, Vicky Richards and Joanita Todd.
An ode to retirement

English lecturer and poet Associate Professor Paul Kavanagh officially retired at the end of first semester this year after 31 years at the University. Following is most of the speech he gave at a farewell held for him in the Treehouse Room of the Shortland Union last month.

Even then David’s lectures were famous. They were the best. Well organised, informed, insightful, and short. One lasted all of twenty-five minutes. At the end David looked up from his notes and said: Well, that’s all I know on that subject.

And we did, we all wrote lectures. Two or three a week. All on subjects we had, up until then, known nothing about. It was an education in itself. I threw my notes out a few days ago. Thousands of hours work. All old fashioned now, even I wasn’t interested enough to want to read them.

I kept coming back to some authors trying to get it right this time.

One of my senior colleagues once said to me, the trouble with you, Paul, is that you teach Donne as if he were a major author. Yes, I had to admit, I did.

In my research I’ve always liked collaboration. But when Brian Suters suggested to Allan Chawner that he work with me on a photographic project, he was appalled. God no. No, not a poet, he said. Anything but a poet.

He was right of course. No good could come of it—just a beautiful friendship, trips to France, China, Japan and England, on the grounds that we had to accompany the shows, and the belief that between us we had made something beautiful.

Ross Fiddes and music came later. Abelard and Heloise, or rather Heloise and Abelard.

Ross I think was sceptical of me until one day I sent him a scene that actually made him cry. You made me cry, he said, you bastard, and they were real tears. From then on we were sunk. What we were writing was going to be no light musical.

One of our readers said: There are so many words. I have never seen so many words!

And I’d been saying to Ross from the start: There are too many notes!
Another reader wrote in the margin:
Vulgar in great poetry.

Right now we're imagining
What it will be like in the Cathedral.
Magic, I think. Pure magic.
October 10, 11, 12, 17, 18, 19.
Be there.

Chris Pollnitz is the one
Who has suffered most from collaborating with me.
First it was the Mattara Water Board Poetry Prize
(one year Chris read 6,000 entries)
Now he's inherited Creative Writing
Christopher,
May whichever gods DH Lawrence
Chose to worship, be with you—
Whether kings of the underworld
Or the difficult women of mining towns
Or even Persephone
Of the smoking-blue gentians—
You deserve everything they choose to give.

Of all the people in administrative posts
Who quietly did their jobs
And made academic life possible,
I have to mention one: John Ramsland.
Whenever I had a student with a seemingly
Impossible problem,
I'd send them to John: the Dean.
Generous-minded and attentive,
I never had any come back
To say he hadn't helped them.

I've been having trouble getting that feeling,
You know, the one we all dream will come
The first morning of our retirement,
The one that says:
This is the beginning of the big holiday.

So I went for a walk in Blackbutt,
Saying to myself things like,
When you've reached sixty
Every day is a gift,
And, this is the start of a journey.

As I walked
I could hear a sea of voices coming up from the valley.
Birds, but there are so many of them.
Then I realised they were fruit bats,
And thought, now that's my idea of a university.
Everyone having something to say
In their own peculiar way.

But they reminded me of some of my
Thursday afternoon groups,
Hairy, intoxicated, smelly,
With body piercing in unthinkable places,
Too noisy, too eagerly saying their own thing
To listen to each other.

Then as I walked down the track
Something flew across, soft, silent, watching me.
That's more like it, I thought.
All I have to do is wait and be quiet.
Then I will hear its voice.

I love Friday morning groups
They've already started their weekend,
They're still and willing to listen.

One night after one too many
Of Tyrell's peppery reds
I was sounding off to my family.
I said: You know, I've learned so much about life
Since I started teaching creative writing.
Morgan, my second son, quick as a flash, said:
Pity it's too late.

What I learned was
That everyone lives in a world that is both like
And totally unlike anyone else's.

It was my job to leave space
For my students
To unfold their worlds
In stories, poems, songs—
Because they were worth while in themselves.

I'm looking forward
To not knowing what day of the week it is.
One of my friends says:
Retirement is waking up late
And asking:
What kind of Saturday is it today?

I would have just
Closed my computer
And quietly ridden off into the sunset,
If it hadn't been for Karyn,
Who took the photo
And designed the invitation.
Thank you Karyn.

I'm not going to name the people
Who have meant most to me,
Students, colleagues, friends,
There are too many,
And I don't want to miss anyone out.
Just turn up for a hug before you go,
So I can tell you I'm grateful,
And that I will remember.

Abelard and Heloise
Book and lyrics by Paul Kavanagh – Music by Ross Fiddes
Starring direct from London's West End Stephen Weller and Sue Carson
For information and bookings phone Kerry at Shakespeare et al on 4928 4149
Christ Church Cathedral October 10,11,12,17,18,19
Future sports stars win scholarships

The University gave the careers of six future Australian sports stars a financial boost last month with the University Sports Scholarships awards.

Chair of NUSport Board Trevor John said the University Undergraduate and Friends of the University scholarships, which are awarded annually, recognise the outstanding sporting abilities of six students.

"The University has a wealth of sporting talent and these scholarships encourage our students to pursue their sporting careers," said Trevor. "The scholarships not only establish a standard of sporting excellence that complements the University's academic achievements, they also recognise the students' achievements and commitment to the University's sporting community.”

Many of this year's female recipients are involved in non-traditional sports like rugby union and international sports such as badminton and diving. Past recipients of sports scholarships have included Triple Paralympic gold medallist Heath Francis and Australian windsurfing champion Michael Lancey. This year's winners have aspirations of continuing to represent Newcastle, the University and Australia at an international level.

Each scholarship is worth $1,000. The recipients for 2002 are:

Friends of the University Sports Scholarship:  
Ching Siang Wang - Badminton; Bachelor of Commerce  
University of Newcastle Sports Scholarship:  
James Beasley - Swimming; Bachelor of Management  
James Kemp - Soccer; Bachelor of Medical Radiation Science  
Krystle Hitchcock - Diving; studying Bachelor of Psychology  
Peter Mauro - Triathlon; Bachelor of Teaching/Bachelor of Health & PE  
Tobie McGann - Rugby Union/Touch; Bachelor of Radiation Therapy

Travel agency wins national award

One of the University's official travel agencies, Travelworld on King, was named Corporate Travel Agency of the Year at the National Travel Industry Awards in Melbourne last month.

The Newcastle-based business was established by former Traveland franchisee Barry Warwick, following the collapse of the group last year. Despite the uncertainty surrounding the travel industry, Barry took the courageous decision to expand his business and offered jobs to eight former Traveland staff, who joined his existing staff in the renovated and rebranded Travelworld on King.

"Winning this award against travel agencies from around the country is quite an achievement for Newcastle," Barry said. "We're very proud.”

Barry attributes the success of his business to the calibre of his staff and the use of proven technology that has helped them to increase their output.

"When Traveland went under I picked the right people to add to those I already had working for me,” Barry said. “We now have a total of 17 people working for us.”

Ready, set, scamper

Commonwealth Games bronze medallist in judo Martin Kelly sounded the start in the annual Campus Scamper last month.

Hundreds of competitors from Sunday strollers to elite athletes paid a gold coin donation to take part in a three kilometre walk or a five kilometre run around the Callaghan campus on August 21.

Damien Jackal won the 5km run for the second consecutive year in 17m03, with Amy Walker the first female across the line. In the walk, Karl Smith and Heidi Rulledge took male and female honours. Proceeds from the scamper were donated to 2002 Relay for Life to raise funds for the Cancer Council.
Newcastle through French eyes

The University last month launched the online publication of two new translations of French visitors' descriptions of Newcastle in the 19th century.

The translations are the work of the Archives, Rare Books and Special Collections Unit (ARBSC) that contains a wide collection of historical research material relating to Newcastle and the Hunter region. This research includes a number of important early accounts from individuals who travelled through the region and wrote descriptions of what they saw.

Archives Officer Gianni Di Gravio said the accounts to be launched this week have until now remained in their original French and unknown to most English speaking Novocastrians.

"The first account is Henri Rochefort's 'Noumea to Newcastle: The Story of an Escape'. Rochefort visited Newcastle in 1874 after he made a daring escape from prison in New Caledonia, where he was serving time for his notorious role in the French Revolution of 1870," said Gianni.

"The second translation comes from the Comte de Beavoir's visit in October 1866 and looks at coal mining in the region."

The first translation was prepared by the University's Emeritus Professor of French, Kenneth Dutton and the second translation by Dr Marie Ramsland of the School of Language and Media as part of the University's Virtual Coquun-Hunter River Project.

The Virtual Coquun-Hunter River Project aims to create a digital repository of the early accounts and descriptions of the Hunter Region with a view to stimulating research and finding possible solutions to environmental and social problems by examining historical records," Gianni said.

The plan is to create an online virtual Coquun Hunter River that people can sail up at different time periods, where they will be able to access a series of digitised historical materials such as scanned accounts from books and diaries, oral history transcriptions, paintings and photographs.

The Project can be viewed online at http://www.newcastle.edu.au/services/library/collections/archives/int/chrp/coquunhunter.html

Lecturer manages top band

Phoebe Mclntyre with Supersonic

A lecturer from the School of Design, Communication and Information Technology, Phoebe McIntyre has guided a group of young performers to national success.

Phoebe, who teaches courses on radio production and popular music, manages Supersonic – the band that recently won the prestigious Future Rock 2002 national band competition. He was executive producer for two of the band's CD releases, with both being played on national and international media, and also produced two videos for them, which appeared recently on ABCTV. Supersonic won the web-based National Youth Week Rockit Song Competition in 2000.

"I am currently negotiating with commercial recording companies on their behalf as well as seeking a Department of Communication, Information and Technology grant to support their touring activity," Phoebe says.
PhD student Martin Kelly won a bronze medal in the Judo under 100kg competition at the Commonwealth Games in Manchester last month.

Martin, who is currently ranked number one in Australia, is completing his PhD in Chemistry and has been studying judo for 18 years. He first made the Australian team in 1992 when he was picked in the Under 20 side for the Junior World Titles in Argentina and has been a member of the Australian A Judo team since 1997.

The selection path for the Commonwealth Games wasn’t all smooth sailing for Martin, however, with a loss at the Australian nationals last year leaving him with valuable points to make up.

“I got three international results that got me over the line,” he said. “The University helped me with funding to attend the final selection tournament in Korea, which was great.”

Martin fulfilled the goal he set himself of bringing back a medal from the Commonwealth Games.

“I was beating the English competitor, who ended up winning the silver medal, until the final minutes of the semi. Half an hour later I beat Montgomery from Northern Ireland to win the bronze.”

Martin trains around 20 hours a week with weights and aerobics at the Forum Sports and Aquatic Centre and travels to Sydney for Judo training three or four times a week. He is currently in training for the US Open next month.