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The University’s Restructure Plan was approved on October 12 after an exhaustive consultation process, and is now available on the University’s web site: http://www.newcastle.edu.au/externalreviews/university/restructure/restructure.htm. Council has also endorsed the plan at its meeting on October 26, and I am sure that we are all looking forward to settling into the new structure as soon as possible in 2002.

May I thank all who have played leadership roles in the process, and the many staff and students who participated and contributed to the final outcome. It is highly commendable that the new structure will be introduced without major disruption and with a real sense of purpose and achievement in moving into a new set of organisational arrangements for the University. Our new structure has a number of distinctive underlying principles and philosophies, which I hope are broadly appreciated and understood. These changes were absolutely necessary in order for us to be successful in meeting our goals and objectives for the next five to 10 years in an increasingly competitive and resource limited world.

I trust that all staff have by now received a letter advising of their position within the new structure. This is obviously essential for effective planning for the 2002 academic year. For academic staff, it is also a necessary precursor to the consultation processes which are being undertaken by the Pro Vice-Chancellors in relation to the appointments of the Deputy Executive Deans, Heads of Schools and Assistant Deans for the new faculties.

Staff of the new central divisions will also be aware of their roles, which will support the academic and other major objectives of the faculties and the University, and coordinate the major University operations, within a ‘one university’ environment.

Staff and students of our Central Coast based operations will be pleased to know that the Central Coast Campus Board has been recently appointed, and will meet soon to consider and advise on the future of our Central Coast programs. Major responsibilities for Central Coast activities will be met by all faculties of the University, with special roles being identified for academic and general staff on the Ourimbah Campus, the Gosford Hospital site of Central Coast Health, and other key sites. The Director, Central Coast Campuses, the Pro Vice-Chancellor with portfolio responsibility for the Central Coast Campuses, Central Coast based schools and health units, will all have major leadership roles supporting our ‘joint venture’ with the Hunter Institute NSW TAFE.

I would like to pay tribute in this column to our University Secretary and Registrar, Mrs Gem Cheong, who has recently announced that she will be leaving the University to take a position as University Secretary at Curtin University of Technology from 2002. I have had the pleasure of working with Gem at two universities for more than 24 years, and it is with a sense of sadness that I say farewell to a friend and colleague. All of us have been positively influenced by Gem’s hard work and close attention to detail and she will depart the University, after many years of outstanding service, with our warmest regards and best wishes.

Finally, I would like to share some thoughts about the tragic events of September 11 in New York and Washington. These events have profoundly affected me personally and I am still in a state of shock and disbelief. I am sure that I speak for all members of the University in expressing our sadness at the loss of lives arising from this and subsequent events, and in extending our condolences to the families effected by the tragedy. The statements made to the media by the Acting Vice-Chancellor, Professor Brian English, expressed the deep sadness of the University regarding these events and referred to ‘a gathering of Americans and their friends’ to give support and comfort to the American students studying in Newcastle. The University also reaffirmed its commitment to international goodwill and to our ongoing role in servicing and supporting students, staff and communities of all faiths and creeds. May I heartily endorse those actions and views, and express a desire for peace to return to all nations and peoples effected by these events as soon as possible.

Roger S Holmes
Vice-Chancellor and President
Engineering and Built Environment – a happy marriage

Pro Vice-Chancellor Professor Adrian Page believes the new Engineering and Built Environment Faculty brings together disciplines with a lot of potential areas for interaction into what should be a “happy marriage”.

“In the 1970s, when I first came to the University, I lectured on the concepts of structural behaviour to architecture students and they used the laboratory facilities in engineering. In recent years there hasn’t been enough interaction like this between the current Faculties and I think that our coming together will make this easier.”

Adrian, who grew up in regional NSW, is a structural engineer who did his undergraduate degree part time at the Newcastle College of the University of New South Wales while working as a cadet engineer for the Hunter District Water Board. After graduation he worked in Australia and Canada as a structural engineer for seven years before returning to Newcastle as a young academic in 1970. He did his PhD while he taught and built a successful career as an academic, eventually becoming Dean of Engineering in 1997.

Adrian’s research in structural masonry is internationally recognised, and he has published widely in this area. He also has strong industry links including connections with the clay brick industry, who have contributed towards his Chair since 1991.

While Adrian expects that architects and construction managers will benefit from working more closely with engineering, he also believes that engineers will gain skills in design and project management through future interaction under the new Faculty structure. He sees potential for Industrial Design to expand as well and benefit from interaction with engineering disciplines, particularly mechanical and mechatronics.

“It’s not all one way and I think it is crucial that people understand that engineering won’t dominate the new Faculty. All the disciplines coming into the Faculty have their own strengths. Engineering has a great research profile – one of the strongest in Australia – and Architecture, Construction Management and Industrial Design have excellent reputations amongst the professions for their programs.”

The potential for interaction between the different areas is genuine and immediate, Adrian says, particularly with the recent establishment of a node of the new Commonwealth Research Centre for Construction Innovation in the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Design. The Centre for Sustainable Technology in the Faculty of Engineering was another area in which interaction could expand, with strong research interest in both current faculties in sustainability in general and energy efficient buildings in particular.

“Staff in architecture and construction management are interested in thermally efficient buildings and engineering has the expertise and facilities for thermal modelling,” Adrian said. “In Engineering we have just begun a large research project investigating the thermal performance of masonry housing that involves the construction of a large testing rig as well as two test houses near the Forum Sports and Aquatic Centre. There is certainly potential for linkage grants in this area involving industry and a number of disciplines within the new Faculty.”

The physical location of some of the disciplines in the new Faculty would be a challenge and Adrian hopes that some might be brought together. Another challenge involves convincing academic staff, who are operating in successful department or faculty structures, of the need for change and the potential benefits.

“One of the real attractions of the new structure is that it will hopefully reduce the administrative burden on academic staff and free them up to do more of what they are good at – teaching and research.”

Adrian will also be responsible for overseeing the University portfolio of research. As an active researcher in a thriving research culture, he feels well equipped for the task and has some strong ideas about what should be on the agenda.

“I’ll be working with Professor Ron MacDonald and staff across the University to formulate a new strategic plan for research in the context of the new faculties. There are a lot of hard decisions to be made to respond to the new DETYA funding models as well as supporting emerging technologies and areas of potential strength in research across the University.”

One thing that Adrian says will be important in the new Faculty is to preserve discipline identities within the new structure, which will include four schools.

“It is important for professional accreditation purposes that graduates retain their identity with a specific discipline and that will be a challenge for the Heads of Schools.”

Other Faculty priorities will be the internationalisation of its programs, maintaining a healthy student profile, raising awareness of career opportunities for women in engineering and construction management, and proactively supporting Indigenous students across the Faculty.

“The Faculty has the potential to be extremely strong and vibrant,” he said. “I think the restructure is quite exciting and the challenge will be to permeate that enthusiasm down to the level of individual academics to encourage them to interact with their colleagues from other disciplines.”

While there will be a lot of details to organise, Adrian says the new Faculty will be ready to begin operations and meet the challenges ahead by the start of next year.
Outstanding academic honoured with Doctor of Science

Dr Irina Belova from the Diffusion in Solids research group has been awarded the highest degree given by the University – a Doctor of Science – at the October 25 graduation.

Irina gained her bachelor, masters and PhD degrees in applied mathematics in the former Soviet Union. She earned the honour for her submission, Diffusion in Alloys, which comprises 70 research papers published in international journals that spanned just seven years of research. Most of her papers have been published in the Philosophical Magazine, one of the world's oldest (1798) and most prestigious scientific journals.

Leader of the Diffusion in Solids research group in the Faculty of Engineering Professor Graeme Murch said most academics would require three or four lifetimes to publish so many papers.

"Irina is a theorist – her work is entirely mathematically based and describes the way atoms move around in materials," Graeme said. "Much of her theory has been verified by computer simulations and applied to the analysis of data in a large number of engineering materials such as super-alloys and intermetallic compounds."

The Doctor of Science award is rare and is given only if the candidate satisfies a panel of distinguished international examiners that their research has made a very substantial contribution to knowledge. Irina’s thesis of published work was described by her examiners as "a most penetrating study and a major contribution to this area of engineering research known as materials science."

Irina was awarded a Lenin Prize for research excellence in the Soviet Union but was uncertain where she would go from there until she applied for and won the University of Newcastle Postdoctoral Fellowship for Women in 1993.

"I don’t remember a time when I haven’t been studying," she said. "I just carried on from school to university and kept studying – it was quite common in the Soviet Union for women to go into maths, science and engineering fields, which were about 50/50 with girls and boys. Doing research is a form of studying, and a very enjoyable form."

Irina is now Co-Leader of the Diffusion in Solids group and is believed to be the only woman to have been awarded a Doctor of Science by the University. She was naturalised six years ago and plans to stay in Newcastle to continue her work. She was recently awarded the highly competitive Queen Elizabeth II Fellowship, which will fund her research for the next five years and also received the Russell Prize from the Australian Academy of Science for her outstanding contributions to research. The University Council last month promoted Irina to Associate Professor (Research).

Anthrax – a tool of terror?

The Anthrax bacterium, currently being used by terrorists to deadly effect in America, is often found in soils where it normally exists as a spore, says University microbiologist Professor Richard Barry.

"Just as plant seeds can remain in a packet for years and then burst into growth when planted, so the anthrax bacillus will wait for the right conditions in fermenting or decaying material and can thrive," Richard says. "Once it gets into a susceptible host, it grows rapidly and produces disease."

Anthrax can affect sheep, cattle, pigs and horses, and generally gets into the animal through cuts and scratches.

"In humans, anthrax is usually contracted through a cut and the infection develops into a sore which is treatable with antibiotics. However there is also pulmonary anthrax in which spores are inhaled into the lung. These are rare cases but by far the worst, because the bacteria get directly into the lungs and quickly poison the blood."

In these cases death can occur in 48 hours. The condition is treatable with antibiotics, but usually the victim dies before the anthrax poisoning is diagnosed. It is not transmittable through the air like influenza because the infection is in the blood, however it could be spread by bodily fluids. Richard suggests the threat to use aerosol clouds to spread anthrax is real but unlikely to occur.

"Anthrax could be dumped from the air and would affect people on the ground, however the bacteria would probably rapidly disperse and settle down and remain inert once it reached the ground."

While anthrax does pose a danger, Richard says it's controllable and there is no reason for alarm.
Partners in study

Husband and wife Roger Baxter and Barbara-Lee Crickmore celebrated the completion of a long-term partnership in study when they were both awarded PhDs at the October 25 graduation.

Roger and Barbara-Lee met at TAFE while completing their Higher School Certificates.

"We were both in the process of changing our lifestyles," says Barbara-Lee.

She sat for the HSC after deciding to pursue a career as a primary school teacher, so that she could care for her children from her first marriage and spend school holidays with them. As she became more involved with the education of deaf and hearing-impaired students, Barbara Lee became motivated to research the quality and quantity of education provided to these students.

Roger's PhD was motivated by his work as a teacher and in child care, and he says the doctorate was a challenge he wanted to see if he could complete.

"I also thought my Mum would love telling her friends and neighbours about her son the doctor," he joked.

With four adult children between them, Barbara-Lee and Roger were free to structure their lives around their studies. They moved to within walking distance of the Callaghan campus and established offices at the University and at home. After studying their HSCs, bachelors and masters degrees together, the couple say they were familiar with each other's stress patterns and need for space.

"When we needed a break, I would go shopping all day and Roger would work in the garden," Barbara-Lee said.

They worked 10 hours a day on their research, usually six to seven days a week, and have not had a holiday since the mid-1990s.

"Our friends, some of whom have completed postgraduate research work, understood - or at least appeared to - why we were not always available and why we kept our answering machine on when we were actually at home," Barbara-Lee said.

Roger's PhD confronts claims that all children are adversely affected by attendance at child care centres or separation from mothers who work.

"It's black and thick, over 300 pages, and probably deserves to be passed on the basis of weight alone," he said. "I looked at whether the physical, social, structural and cultural components of a child care centre can cause unwanted behaviours in children, and found no common causes."

Barbara-Lee investigated the provision of education services for deaf children in NSW since 1860 and found that a deaf student's language acquisition was essential to academic achievement. She is now working part-time at the University's Special Education Centre for Makaton (Australia), a language program that provides a means of communication and encourages language development in individuals with communication difficulties. She is also a casual lecturer with the Learning and Development Skills Unit at the University.

Roger tutors casually with the Learning and Development Skills Unit but is looking for full-time work.

Creating sweeter tomatoes

Two University researchers are attempting to create sweeter tomatoes by making a tomato's sugar gene work harder.

The result won't just mean a more succulent salad, it would save millions of dollars in the tomato processing and canning industries. By increasing the tomato's sweetness by a couple of percentage points, the cost of processing sauces and pastes - basically heating to remove excess water - would decrease.

"We estimate that the saving would be nearly $200 million in the US market alone," says researcher Dr David McCurdy of the School of Biological and Chemical Sciences. "If there is more sugar and less water, then processors wouldn't need to use so much energy to drive off the water and to get a concentrated sauce."

The biotechnology project emerged as a result of basic research undertaken over many years by David's colleague, Professor John Patrick. With funding from the Australian Research Council and support from a US agricultural company, they have cloned the family of sugar genes and are now working on changing the level of activity of the gene in the plant and seeing how that affects sugar levels in the ripening tomato.

"This is exciting fundamental research with a strategic industrial application at the end," David says. "If successful, the concept could be applied to other fruits. For instance, the grape is very close in terms of biology to the tomato and the idea could be equally valid for the wine industry."
The power of positive thinking

Kay Dean is the perfect Regional Disability Liaison Officer (RDLO).

When the Federal Government first conceived of the RDLO initiative to address the poor rates of participation by people with a disability in higher education and the workforce, they decided to place people in host universities Australia-wide to address the needs of specific areas. The RDLOs link disability services in education sectors - school, vocational education and training, and higher education - within a region and develop and foster high quality services for students with disabilities and promote their transition through education into employment.

Kay says she couldn’t have written the job description better herself. Not only did she have a background in disability services at the University, she had the requisite experience in schools while she worked to establish the University’s Unilink program, and was knowledgeable about the University environment. During her 21 years of service at the CAE and the University, Kay had always worked with students (including those with disabilities and disadvantages) and felt attuned to their needs and their problems. But there is more to Kay’s recent successful reappointment to this crucial regional position than the coincidental combination of her previous work experience. It is her contagious enthusiasm for the task, her seemingly tireless dedication to developing services to help people go forward, and a deeply felt conviction that people should be given opportunity to pursue their dreams.

"My pet thing is that everyone has so much potential within them and it causes me a lot of concern when people can’t realise that potential because they don’t have the opportunities presented to them," Kay said. "A lot of people don’t even make goals. People should be encouraged to think about what they want to do in the future and be helped to reach their goals."

Kay’s own career path is a glowing example of what people can achieve through the power of positive thinking, with a little support along the way. She began work as an RDLO in June last year when the initiative was funded for 12 months and the University was successful in applying to host the position. With the future funding of the project in doubt, Kay and the Central Queensland RDLO travelled to Canberra last September to present an overview of what they and other RDLOs had achieved and what they hoped to achieve in future set out in a strategic plan. They were successful in attracting funding to the initiative to continue established positions for a further three years and create some new ones in areas of need. In all there are now 10 RDLOs around Australia.

"Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows that 18 percent of Australians have a disability. The Government has shown that outcomes for people with a disability were poor with very few of them even completing senior high school, let alone proceeding through to higher education and employment."

After surveying regional staff working with students with a disability to pinpoint their needs, Kay has created a network that links practitioners in schools, TAFE and the University to promote the exchange of information and develop a supportive professional environment. This means students receive accurate information and have access to up-to-date resources. As well as holding regular meetings to bring together teachers and disability staff from the cross-sectoral group, she gathers resources and identifies (and sometimes initiates) professional development opportunities. She has established a website and runs an email list, aiming to have a representative from every school in her region on it, as well as TAFE, teacher consultants and University staff.

"I’ve worked my way up by proving myself, by coming up with good ideas that don’t cost much and that have good outcomes. I have always had my finger on the pulse of what is happening to students and I sit on a lot of committees."

Kay knows how to set goals and work towards them and will soon complete her Bachelor of Social Sciences from the University. She tells a story about her meeting with a group of Year 10 students at Lake Macquarie (formerly Booragul) High School as part of her work with the Unilink program.

“They were all talking about how nothing good could ever happen to them because of the school they went to and I began asking them what they wanted to be. One of them asked about my job and another said 'we could never be like you'. I told them that I had sat in that very classroom and that I had left school in Year 10 because noone told me I could make anything of myself. Everyone needs encouragement and opportunity, not just groups with disabilities.”

Kay finds it particularly exciting to be part of a national initiative and says it has helped to increase participation rates in higher education and vocational education and training for people with a disability. She particularly enjoys travelling to Canberra to deliver briefing papers to heads of divisions about the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) funded initiative.

"We can really change things and having an impact at that level feeds my desire to make sure that needs are met. The RDLOs are a really cohesive group that is working together to benefit the whole of Australia in the disability area."
Filled with disquiet

Australia risks retreating into the dark shadow of xenophobia and racism and away from social justice and human rights, reconciliation ambassador Rick Farley told an audience at the University's inaugural Human Rights/Social Justice Lecture last month.

"I am 48 years old and I am filled with more disquiet now than I can recall feeling at any other time in my life," Rick told an audience of 300 staff, students and community members at the lecture.

"I greatly fear that the milk of human kindness is drying up in Australia and I don't know how long that will last. There is a lot of fear in our community and fear has extremely ugly faces."

Rick abhorred terrorist attacks, supported US attempts to build an international coalition to respond to the attacks on New York and Washington, and also accepted that military operations form part of the international response.

"But I also believe that the only lasting solution is to address the conditions that allow terrorism to survive - lack of social justice and lack of human rights."

Rick Farley is co-chair of the NSW State Reconciliation Committee and an Ambassador for Reconciliation. He rocketed to national prominence in 1988 when he became the unorthodox Executive Director of the National Farmers Federation (NFF). He was instrumental in setting up the national Landcare Program. Rick resigned from the NFF in 1995 and now heads his own consulting group that specialises in the development of land use agreements at community level, particularly in relation to native title issues. He was one of the 10 eminent Australians who delivered the Barton Lectures for the Centenary of Federation this year.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Roger Holmes welcomed Rick to the Griffith Duncan Theatre to deliver the first Human Rights/Social Justice Lecture on October 17.

"This lecture series has been established to provide an opportunity for the University and the wider community to reflect on issues of social justice and it brings me great pleasure to see so many people here to be part of this important event," Roger said.

During the free lecture, entitled A Personal Journey, Rick related how he was in his 30s before he first encountered Aboriginal people. He described the effect they had on him, as well as his views on their struggle for acceptance through the reconciliation process - a process he believes will be set back by the response to the attacks on America.

"Fear and hatred are on the increase in my land and that scares me. We have been casten by constant exposure to terror and horror in the media and our leaders refuse to rise above popularism to embrace a long term view," Rick concluded.

Pin-worms improve cancer treatment

University researchers at the Mater Misericordiae Hospital have been working on world leading technology in radiation treatment for cancer patients.

They have developed a measurement technique in brachytherapy that pinpoints the radiation dose within the cancer target.

Brachytherapy is a form of radiation treatment using radioactive isotopes implanted into the cancer site; this allows a more specific treatment of the cancer and causes less damage to surrounding tissue.

However one of the problems in this type of treatment is determining the exact placement of the radioactive isotopes, and the University researchers have developed a system they believe can resolve this uncertainty.

"We are using radiation detecting crystals we call pin worms," said medical physicist Marie Hood. "They emit light proportional to the amount of radiation they are exposed to. They are smaller than a pinhead and can be inserted through the treatment needle to take a radiation measurement before being replaced by the radioactive isotope."

The pin-worm crystals were manufactured at the Institute of Nuclear Physics in Poland to the Mater's specifications. The research is being fine-tuned before clinical trials can start. However they may be able to use the process now by setting up a mock patient, using the pin worm system to get an accurate measurement and then putting the real patient in the picture to receive the treatment.

"We believe we can use this technique to accurately measure the radiation dose inside the target for the first time," said Claire.

Several overseas medical centres have shown interest in the technique and the 'pin-worms' are now being made available commercially. The project was funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council.
A national workshop held at the Ourimbah Campus recently saw 24 delegates from universities around Australia discuss issues relating to information systems and e-business education.

The Australian Council of Professors and Heads of Information Systems (ACPHIS) workshop reviewed progress on an Australian Universities Teaching Council (AUTC) Project, a broad-based national investigation into business education sponsored by the Federal Government. They examined industry feedback on satisfaction with graduates, and looked at determining ways to improve information systems and e-business education.

Workshop host, Head of the Central Coast School of eBusiness and Management Professor Steve Elliot, said the AUTC Project has far reaching ramifications for the delivery of business degree programs in Australia. A member of the Information Systems Review Group and Chair of the eBusiness Review Group, Steve said the study is concerned with the future of business education in Australia.

“There is a growing awareness amongst scholars and practitioners that the new economy, widespread use of information and communication technologies, globalisation of business and Consumer debt study launched

As concern about financial overcommitment increases, a joint research project being undertaken on the Central Coast Campus has been recognised as the first consumer based analysis of credit and debt overcommitment in Australia.

The research, conducted jointly between the Financial Counsellors' Association of NSW (FCAN) and Dr Margaret Griffiths and Mr Bill Renwick from the School of eBusiness and Management, was launched by the Minister for Fair Trading, Mr John Watkins, in Sydney last month.

Margaret and Bill said the report was prepared with details from 2512 financial counselling interviews conducted during 2000, which related to overcommitment. The interviews were conducted in 22 financial counselling services across NSW.

"Consumer credit debt is seen to be a problem but evidence has been limited to case studies and anecdotes," Margaret said. "This report illustrates the advantage of looking behind aggregated data to understand the consumer credit market and consumers' financial overcommitments."

The research prompted the following conclusions:
Focussing on educational outcomes

Executive Director Trevor Gerdsen will draw on the one constant in his diverse career as the focus of his approach to Communication and Information Services — a commitment to education.

"I began my career as a teacher and that educational focus has stayed constant over the past 20 years or so. I want to ensure that our services and the outcomes we support are clearly aimed at the educational outcomes of the institution. Once the staff have a sense of what those educational values and outcomes mean in terms of their role, that will draw them closer to the faculties as a consequence and ensure we achieve the necessary alignment with their objectives."

Trevor sees the challenge ahead as not just resolving issues about how best to utilise the communication and information technology capacity to inform what the University does and to improve decision-making, but also to give those services a flavour that places them in an educational, not technocratic, context.

"In the short term, I'll be working to bring the staff in my group along in the process of deciding what the review means and where we are heading as a result of the restructure. The University has some specific outcomes that it wants to achieve and the sooner we can engage with staff and give them a sense of what that means for them and what part they will play in the bigger plan, the better."

Describing himself as "comfortable with change", Trevor anticipates there will be a period of fine-tuning during which the new executive team of University Services will tease out the details of their work.

"People shouldn't see the new structure as a rigid and impermeable entity. We need to encourage collaborative individualism across University Services and prepare ourselves to be part of a continuous improvement process. We need to ensure we take account of the needs of our staff as individuals, but do so in a context that clearly addresses the organisation's goals and gives staff a sense of their part in realising these."

Trevor grew up in the central Victorian goldmining city of Bendigo and despite having a "maths/science bent" throughout his secondary schooling, opted to study Fine Art at the Bendigo College of Advanced Education. He did a DipEd and "fell into teaching", where he spent 10 years teaching in the TAFE sector. While he enjoyed interacting with students, Trevor was attracted to the challenge of curriculum and resource development. He completed a Graduate Diploma in Management at La Trobe University and wrote a book on copyright issues in education in 1996 (which he is currently updating).

Trevor's experiences as an external student when he completed a Master of Business Administration through the University of Southern Queensland put him on the other side of flexible delivery, an area in which he has undertaken numerous development projects in the VET sector. He is now studying towards his Doctor of Education externally through USQ.

Trevor isn't stressed at the thought of integrating the people in his group and can see a lot of connections between them and a logic to combining them. He hopes University Services achieves a flexible, team-based, collaborative structure where people can continuously come together in different groupings and alignments to achieve outcomes.

"The centre needs to reach out to the faculties to facilitate and enable their decision-making in order to be true partners in delivering our key educational services to our clients."

- Single people or single people with children accounted for over 67% of the client group visiting financial counsellors with overcommitment problems.
- Only 15% of the counselling sessions for overcommitment problems analysed were conducted with clients who reported annual incomes in excess of $30,000 per annum.
- Sixty percent of the client group studied relied on government cash benefits.
- While over 30% of Australian income units own their own home and around 35% rent accommodation, in the case of the client groups studied the proportions are 4% and 63% respectively.
- The proportion of clients who had personal loan debts decreased as age increased — 59% of clients aged 18-24 had personal loan debts compared with 22% aged 65-plus.
- Fifty one percent of the clients receiving income up to $20,000 per annum presented with credit card debt.
- Everyday living expenses featured prominently in clients' other debts with the most common debt being telephone bills.
- The recommendations include: Consumer advocates including reported credit and debt overcommitment in lower income groups in discussions on financial disadvantage.
- Noting the high cost and incidence of credit card debt amongst lower income groups as a method of financing their purchases and investigating an alternative source of finance to assist these groups to manage cash flow.
- Warnings by credit providers to consumers concerning the risks of overcommitment and where to seek free help if required.
- Further study of the high incidence of telephone debt.

"The human cost of the ready availability of credit in our society can be very high," said Margaret. "Bill and I hope that government and financial counsellors can use the study to target services to people needing a financial lifetime."
Executive Director of the Student, Alumni and Community Services group Gail White says the first step in delivering on the University's strategic goal of providing students with a world-class educational experience is defining what that means.

"We can't deliver it unless we understand it. Student experience is influenced by many things from the quality of academic work, which our group can assist in by enabling faculty staff to concentrate on their teaching, to the standard of student services, which can impact adversely on experience if students were unable to find up-to-date information on the web for instance. Even things like the availability of banking services are part of what make up student experience. We need to decide on what services are important to the full range of students including undergraduates, graduates, international students and research students, and ensure that we provide them."

It is Gail's intention to be genuinely in touch with student needs and be proactive in meeting them. This includes trying to avoid dumping students into one basket such as international or undergraduate when there are so many different groupings within those categories with different requirements to each other.

"I have worked at the University for 13 years now in a number of different positions and as I have moved from one to another, I have left each area knowing there were a lot of things left undone. While I find my new role a bit daunting because the job is so big, it's also exciting to be given the opportunity to do the things that I know I need doing."

One example of where the new structure can achieve improvements is in bringing together prospective student staff with careers staff.

"The quality of information provided to prospective students would be enhanced by the knowledge of graduate outcomes and career development," Gail said. "We have the figures that show what happens to people when they graduate and both prospective students and the careers advisers could benefit from having them properly packaged and at their fingertips. The two groups have interacted in the past but are not working closely with each other at the moment."

Gail will examine the possibility of co-locating more of her staff, with the Student Services Centre forming the focus for a lot of the group's activities. She also plans to introduce a Student Enquiry Centre that would be staffed by highly trained people expert in the full range of services offered by the University.

"We will be trying to record the whole life cycle of a student from their first contact with the University through a prospective student activity for example, through application, admission, enrolment, graduation and beyond. We now have the system to support that. We can also keep track of contacts with organisations, community groups and individuals and this will in turn feed into alumni development, the establishment of scholarships and support the efforts of the University Foundation."
a larger critical mass of staff will allow the new vice group to look at ways to focus work and to move people into critical areas at peak times. Gail will consult with the Pro Vice-Chancellors over time to look at the priorities of each faculty and to see where it makes most sense to deliver services. In some cases we may devolve responsibility for a set of services to a faculty if that is where the student contact is happening. We will look at the range of services and how each of the faculties would like to see that delivered. In some areas, expert or professional skills may be diluted if they were devolved."

Gail, who first came to the University from Taree to study Arts in 1978, began her working life teaching English in Greece. After a few years of teaching English and history in Newcastle high schools, she took a job with the public service in 1983, working with the Commonwealth Employment Service in Taree and Newcastle. It was her experience of an employment program for disadvantaged people at CES that led her to apply for a job at the University looking at vocational opportunities for disadvantaged groups. Gail was involved in setting up the Newstep program at the University and has also worked in prospective student liaison, equity and EEO areas. She went to the International Development Office for a while and then supervised the introduction of the NUSTAR student system. "I don't plan to do anything in the new service group without the support of staff," she said. "I acknowledge that there are many people in the new group that are more expert at what they do than I am. I can provide a catalyst for new ways of approaching things and hopefully people will see the benefits to themselves of working more closely with their colleagues."

"Tasks can often be daunting when you are facing them in isolation or in a small group and they become much more achievable when you are part of a larger group."
Dean appointed to Law Reform Commission

Dean of the Faculty of Law Professor Anne Finlay has been appointed to sit on the Australian Law Reform Commission for three years from November 12.

Anne will be one of only four full-time commissioners and the only woman on the Commission, which has been a significant force for change in the nation's legal landscape for more than 20 years.

"The ALRC is a highly successful law reform body if judged by implementation rate, with 75 percent of its recommendations being adopted by the Federal Government," Anne said. "While the task is a bit daunting, this sort of opportunity doesn't arise every day and I'm looking forward to the challenge."

Law reform is essential in a rapidly changing world that demands Australia's laws keep pace with scientific, technological, environmental, economic and social change - or risk irrelevancy. Established in 1975, the ALRC is a permanent, independent federal statutory corporation, operating under the Australian Law Reform Commission Act 1996. Its major activities are referred to it by the federal Attorney-General (known as references).

Anne's first reference will be into civil and administrative penalties, which enable regulatory authorities and government departments to enforce compliance with legislation or achieve effective regulation. The Attorney-General has asked the Commission to review Commonwealth laws relating to the imposition of these penalties to ensure there is a fair, effective and practical system of decision-making and enforcement.

This involves analysis of the principles, practices, procedures and public policy issues associated with civil, administrative and criminal penalties.

Anne, who has been Dean of Law since January 2000, is currently Secretary of the Council of Australian Law Deans and Secretary of the Judicial Conference of Australia. She has been a part-time member of the NSW Mental Health Review Tribunal since 1996 and was for a number of years a member of the Product Safety Committee of the NSW Department of Fair Trading. Anne has published extensively on various aspects of trade practices law and since 1994 has been a member of the editorial board of the Australian and New Zealand Trade Practices Law Bulletin.

"I will take three year's leave of absence to sit on the Commission," Anne said. "I have mixed feelings about leaving the University at this time as I'm interested to see how the restructure will impact on law but this opportunity was difficult to turn down."

Rural Health Department in Tamworth area

The University has signed an agreement with the Federal Government to establish a University Department of Rural Health (UDRH) in the Tamworth/New England area.

The UDRH will have a strong community and public health focus in its education and research activities.

Federal Member for New England Stuart St Clair announced earlier this year that Health Minister Michael Wooldridge had agreed to provide Commonwealth funding of $6.75 million to the Tamworth UDRH project over five years. The funding is provided under the Regional Health Strategy, established to progress the development of a comprehensive health professional education network in rural and regional Australia.

Mr St Clair said that he had been closely following and supporting the progress of the Tamworth UDRH project, adding that he was overjoyed to see the funding agreement set down on paper, confirming a future of health training in Tamworth.

Professor Rob Sanson-Fisher, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, says the UDRH will encourage undergraduate students of medical and health science programs to live, study and work in rural Australia.

"Final year students in Medical Radiation Science, Dietetics and Occupational Therapy, as well as fourth year Medicine students, can add a rural focus to their programs by studying in rural communities linked to the UDRH for up to one year," he said. "It's hoped these students will see the benefits of living and working in a rural community, and return there to practice once they are qualified."

Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Brian English says the UDRH will provide a boost to the economy of the Tamworth region.

"We will need a base for students and lecturers, as well as teaching facilities and student accommodation," he said. "As well as visiting academic staff we will need to employ staff who will live in Tamworth permanently."

Brian says he is delighted that the Federal Government has recognised the quality of teaching and research in the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences.

"The UDRH will extend the University's strong commitment to rural health and assist the Faculty to make a significant contribution in educating practitioners for rural areas."

The University hopes to have the UDRH operational by the start of the 2002 academic year.
Background

The Cultural Industries and Practices Research Centre (CIPS) was created last year to provide a focus for research and consultancy on the understanding of culture in practice. The Centre’s researchers are committed to conducting high quality, applied social scientific research into a broad range of cultural activities, particularly those related to sport, media, leisure, the arts and tourism.

“Culture is one of the most complex words in the English language,” Centre Director David Rowe says. “It has so many layers, including the process of cultivation of the mind, which universities are engaged in. It can also be interpreted as a way of life, including language, beliefs, dress, gestures, etc—all rich areas in terms of research.”

David says the name of the Centre was chosen to reflect the different aspects of culture both as something that is produced by trained professionals and as something that we all, as human beings, create and communicate from the time we enter culture at birth.

Structure

CIPS aims to become an international centre of excellence in cultural studies and to facilitate collaboration by researchers from a range of academic disciplines (as well as external bodies and the community) wishing to undertake research into cultural issues. It also aims to provide a focus for postgraduate training and research in cultural studies.

The CIPS Director runs the Centre with the help of a Management Committee that includes CIPS Deputy Director Dr Deborah Stevenson and founding member Dr Kevin Markwell.

Research

Researchers in CIPS aim to work on projects funded by national competitive grant schemes and other externally funded programs. They can also provide consultancy services. Recent and current research conducted by the Centre includes:

- Media sport, globalisation and regional identity
- Tabloidisation and the reshaping of contemporary newspapers
- International approaches to cultural planning
- The organisation and development of ‘global’ gay tourism
- Images of cities and regions
- Universities and the media
- The organisation of the International Gay Games, Sydney 2002
- Pay television and sport in Australia
- Australian arts and cultural policy development.

Consultancy projects have seen researchers, in cooperation with the University’s Employment Studies Centre, examine young people’s attitudes to trade unions, media coverage of the fashion industry, and local impacts of the closure of BHP’s steelmaking in Newcastle. Currently, CIPS members are researching cultural tourism development in the Upper Hunter in a project funded by the Commonwealth Government. Researchers in CIPS are mainly based in the current Faculty of Arts and Social Science (and will be in the Faculty of Education and Arts from next year) but also include research associates in the USA, UK and Canada.

“We are in the process of developing linkages with research centres overseas,” David said, “including three in the UK: the Centre for International Media Analysis at the University of Luton, the Pavis Centre for Social and Cultural Research at the Open University, and the Centre for Communication and Information Studies at the University of Westminster.”

Director

David, who was born in Devon in the UK and educated at the Universities of Nottingham, York and Essex, came to Australia in 1981 as a ‘refugee’ from Margaret Thatcher. He taught Sociology at Charles Sturt University’s Wagga campus while finishing off a PhD on the post-punk British independent music scene, before coming to Newcastle to teach media and cultural studies in 1986. He is Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Leisure and Tourism Studies in the Faculty of Arts and Social Science, of which he is also Deputy Dean.

“It’s been difficult to gain credibility in universities in the areas I have studied—like music and TV sport—which are regarded as low or mass culture and, therefore, as almost not worthy of attention,” David said. “The cultural studies field, like sociology before it, has had a hard time establishing itself in academe. There has always been a great hunger in the wider media to talk about popular culture because people feel so deeply about it. But until recently many academics have disparaged researching everyday life as something of a trivial hobby. On the contrary, I see these subjects as fascinating and important.”

David says he was initially drawn to read sociology at university to annoy the conservative headmaster of his Plymouth Catholic high school. Then he came across a text by Stanley Cohen — Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers—and discovered that sociology texts could be readable as well academically rigorous. He has now been author and editor of seven books of his own on a range of cultural forms and institutions, including sport, the media, popular music, tourism, leisure, and television.

“I found that I could apply my intellectual energies to aspects of culture that were hard to see analytically because they already surrounded me.” David explained.
University supports youth suicide prevention gig

The University helped to fund the Resilience Gig, a concert organised by six Newcastle high school students at the Palais Royale in October in aid of youth suicide prevention.

Head of the Department of Leisure and Tourism Studies, Associate Professor David Rowe, said his Department was pleased to be one of the sponsors of Resilience.

"We have been very impressed with the initiative of these young people from several of the region's high schools in organising a gig that aided the Hunter Valley Suicide Response Team," David said. "Australia has one of the highest levels of youth suicide in the world. By getting involved, the University is saying to young people that there are many more exciting options in life than a premature and unproductive death."

One of the organisers, 18 year old Damon Pieterse, who is in Year 12 at St Francis Xavier High School, said that all young people around his age know someone who is affected by depression.

"Youth suicide is a real issue for young people and we wanted to contribute to a charity that would make a difference," Damon said. "The Suicide Response Team offer an immediate response to anyone who calls - they'll come straight to where you are and deal with you on a one to one basis."

The Resilience gig was also the debut performance of Damon's band, Set at Ease, which performed for free, as did four other young local bands at the all-ages fundraiser. Set at Ease singer and Year 12 classmate of Damon, Cameron Stevenson said that organising the concert was their way of helping.

"The concert has taken up a fair bit of our time when we are getting ready to do the HSC, but raising money for this charity is just as good as getting good marks in our exams," he said. "It showed us just how easy it is to go out and help."

The young people raised over $2,000 for the Hunter Valley Suicide Response Team, which is a non-profit organisation that provides frontline assistance to young people at risk of suicide. As well as the University's Department of Leisure and Tourism Studies, Resilience was sponsored by Retravision, PC Medics, Griffen Printing, and supported by the Palais Royale. Damon, Cameron and their friends also raised funds by organising an out-of-uniform day at St Francis Xavier. Resilience was held on October 12.

Helping redundant workers cope

A new program examining the effects of redundancy on a person's health, well-being and stress levels could become a national model for health and social workers.

The Coping With Redundancy Program will link mentors with men over 40 years of age who have been retrenched from their jobs for at least six months and are still looking for work. The program is being run collaboratively through the Hunter Regional Partnership to Assist Redundant Workers, which comprises the Discipline of General Practice at the University, the region's Anglican welfare agency Samaritans and the Hunter Urban Network of Consumer Health.

Associate Professor Dimity Pond from the University says the aim is to improve the mental and physical health of the redundant men.

"These men fall into negative cycles," she explained. "They feel depressed and find there is not enough to do to fill their days when they are no longer working. The social support network they had through their workplace is gone and many men lose their sense of where they fit into the family home."

Up to 40 men will participate in the program in groups of 10, and each group will meet once a week for up to 10 weeks with a male mentor. The meetings will provide those men who are interested with training in first aid. Groups will also participate in other practical activities such as gardening and carpentry.

"We are now recruiting men to participate in the program," Dimity said. "We hope the program will become a model for coping with the effects of redundancy and can be used in the Hunter and other areas of Australia where high unemployment is both a social and economic problem."
Visiting professor wins major music award

Visiting Professor to the Faculty of Music, Nigel Butterley, has won the $25,000 Paul Lowin Prize, Australia's richest prize for music composition.

Nigel, who lectured in the Conservatorium and the Faculty of Music for more than 18 years, won the award for his Spell of Creation. Originally requested by conductor Roland Peelman for performance at the Newcastle Cathedral to celebrate the Newcastle Bicentenary, the 40 minute composition took eight years to come to fruition.

"Spell of Creation is based principally on the work of English poet Kathleen Raine, whose ideas and poetry have inspired me for the past 10 years," Nigel said.

"While it isn't a religious piece in a specific sense -- there is no mention of God in it -- there is a sense of the sacred pervading it."

When the original commission of the composition fell through, Sydney Philharmonia Choirs took it up. As well as conducting their own concert series, Philharmonia Choirs also perform with the ABC. Nigel's composition is performed by a double choir, a semi-chorus, two soloists and a normal sized orchestra.

Paul Lowin was born in 1893 in Czechoslovakia and settled in Australia in 1939, where he lived for 20 years before returning to Vienna where he died in 1961. His great passion in life was music and he left a will indicating his wish to establish a competition for works by living Australian composers. It took thirty years for an appropriate scheme to be approved by the Chief Justice of NSW in 1990.

The competition, held every two years, is administered by the Australian Music Centre. The Orchestral Prize requires a work scored for a modern chamber or symphony orchestra of at least 30 players and at least 15 independent lines, and must be of not less than 12-15 minutes duration. The judges for the prize said of Nigel's composition:

"This major work ... represents a very significant contribution to the orchestral and choral repertoire. It employs an emotional and richly layered text, while the writing for extensive orchestral, choral and solo vocal forces shows great skill, restraint and sincerity. The selection panel congratulates this composer on a fine work -- the effect of which builds consistently throughout towards a conclusion of genuine power."

Nigel, who holds an honorary doctorate from the University, decided at the age of 15 that he wanted to compose music rather than become a pianist. His earliest surviving composition was written when he was 23. He retired from his position as Senior Lecturer in 1991 and now collaborates with Colin Spiers to teach composition to 15 students as a visiting professor to the Faculty of Music.

While he intends to take a break from composing for a while, he is planning a series of lectures on 20th century music as part of the Sydney University Continuing Education program.

Bulk handling experts meet in Newcastle

Creating an obstacle course inside a conical grain hopper can actually improve the flow of material through its small opening at the base, experts have found.

The use of geometry, inserts and peculiar shapes to enhance the flow of material was one of the many topics under discussion when 150 of the world's authorities in bulk material handling met in Newcastle last month for the Seventh International Conference on Bulk Materials Storage, Handling and Transportation.

They shared their latest findings, developments and experiences on the efficient storage, handling and transportation of bulk solids -- an increasingly important part of mining, chemical processing, agricultural production, and food processing and manufacturing.

The conference, organised by the Australian Society for Bulk Solids Handling, was sponsored by the University's Centre for Bulk Solids and Particulate Technologies and attracted researchers from Australia, the USA, UK, Germany, the Netherlands, Israel, Norway, India, Japan and China. It was held at the University from October 3-5.
Bell frog conservation

Researchers from the Department of Biology are involved in a large program to conserve the endangered Green and Golden Bell Frog.

Kooragang Island, in the Hunter River estuary, has one of the largest remaining wild populations of this frog and a small number of populations are known on the Southern side of the Hunter River near the Callaghan campus. Historically the frog was known from wetlands in nearby suburbs such as Shortland and many people who grew up in the region have memories of this large, brilliantly coloured and distinctive frog. The University has significant wetlands on its Callaghan campus, many of which have been rehabilitated to play a vital role in conserving the area's natural attributes.

The University's Landscape and Ovals Manager Min Woodland has coordinated the construction of 24 ponds on land that was formerly a municipal landfill site to facilitate the study of the ecology of the bell frog. The eventual objective is to establish the frog as a natural inhabitant of the various campus wetlands. The 'bell frog experimental research ponds' as they are known, are not regarded as rehabilitated wetlands. The twenty-four ponds are identical in size and shape and each is enclosed within a frog proof fence. Each pond and its surrounding ground areas have been planned with native water plants and grasses. Water supply is mainly from rainfall but the ponds can be supplemented by rainwater collected from the roof of the Forum Sports and Aquatic Centre.

Mozzies are back

They're back...mosquitos that is! The summer months are almost upon us, as is mosquito breeding time. The University is close to coastal breeding areas, although the majority of mosquitoes originate off campus (ie they do not breed here). The predominant species found at Callaghan breed only in salt water. However, being one of the last tracts of bushland in the area, the campus attracts a significant concentration of adult mosquitoes to take shelter in the bush.

It is virtually impossible to prevent the inward migration of mosquitoes to an area. Individual responsibility is encouraged in preference to chemical controls in order to safeguard the health of staff, students and the environment. The well being of birds and animals that live in the campus bushland must be considered and chemical controls (eg fogging) are, in any case, only effective for very short periods.

Strategies for mosquito control include:

- wearing long sleeved shirts and long pants;
- using repellants;
- avoiding outdoor activities early in the morning or evening;
- avoiding shaded bush areas that harbour mosquitoes.

For more information contact Min Woodland on ext 7038 or Latha.Lewis@newcastle.edu.au.

Housing the PVCs

Physical Planning and Estates staff are busy planning, refurbishing and relocating staff to the newly appointed Pro Vice-Chancellors offices.

The office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor Business and Law is to be located opposite the annex on the ground floor of the Social Science Building. The Faculty's administrative office is currently being relocated to Level 1 of the Social Science Building (SRS 105).

The administrative office of the Faculty of Science and Information Technology is to be relocated to the ground floor of the Maths Building, in close proximity to the Pro Vice-Chancellor's office planned for Level 2.

Extensions to the former Dean of Engineering's office in building EF are proposed for the Pro Vice-Chancellor Engineering and Built Environment. Plans are under way to locate the Office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor Health within the Medical Science's Building.
A former Open Foundation Course (OFC) student of distinguished Aboriginal leader, Dr Bill Jonas, has successfully nominated him to be the subject of a Peoplescape figure.

Peoplescape is a national project to celebrate the Centenary of Federation that called on people from around Australia to nominate their heroes for inclusion in an exhibition of 3000 figures to be displayed on the lawns of Parliament House in Canberra this month.

Part-time teacher in the Aboriginal Studies program Heather Clay nominated Bill because he inspired her when he was teaching in the OFC to continue with her University studies when she doubted her ability to succeed. Bill, who is now Commissioner for Human Rights and Equal Opportunities and Acting Commissioner for Race Discrimination, taught in the OFC in the early '80s.

"Bill had a major impact on my life, as he has for many people," Heather said. "I nominated him because of all the lecturers I encountered on the journey through my degree, he stood out as the most inspiring and encouraging. He had a way of teaching unlike any other and managed to maintain his professional distance while teaching unlike any other and managed to maintain his professional distance while teaching. He accepted the Attorney-General's request to join the Human Rights Commission because he believes he can work better for change from within. Bill was presented with an Honorary Doctorate by the University in 1999 and has also won the Convocation Medal for Professional Excellence.

"I'm very flattered and honoured to have been nominated as part of this exhibition," Bill said. "I loved teaching and the OFC students were all very keen so it was a pleasure for me to teach them. It was also very challenging for me."

The artwork for the Peoplescape figure, done by Aboriginal artist Mini Heath, includes a mushroom cloud with Aboriginal faces in it that represents Bill's experiences on the Royal Commission into British Nuclear Testing in Australia (Maralinga), a black crow which is Bill's personal totem, the colours of the Aboriginal flag, and organisational logos or symbols from the University of Newcastle, IAATSIS, Wollotuka, the National Museum of Australia, and a Naidoc Week symbol of people of all colours coming together in harmony through education.

"The night sky and the stars around the photograph of Bill in the head area of the figure is symbolic of the hope for the future and Bill's important role towards a better future," Heather explained.

The Peoplescape exhibition will take place on the lawns of the old Parliament House in Canberra on November 25.

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**Attention overseas travellers**

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade encourages Australians planning to travel abroad to monitor their travel advice closely during this difficult time internationally. The DFAT web address is www.dfat.gov.au/travel. The site is updated as information becomes available. DFAT also advises people to contact their airlines before they travel and fact in delays at airports in the wake of heightened security measures.

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**Etcetera**

For Rent

Fully furnished one-bedroom unit in Lambton is offered for rent to a visiting academic between 17 Dec 2001 and 15 June 2002. Female non-smoker preferred. Rent $150 p/w + expenses. For more info contact Christa on 5163 or incgm@alinga.newcastle.edu.au.
Awards and honours

Professor Graham Goodwin has been awarded a Federation Fellowship worth $1.125 million over five years.

The Federal Government created the fellowships to retain leading researchers in Australia and to encourage Australian researchers overseas to return to Australian universities. They are the most prestigious and richest publicly funded research fellowships ever offered in Australia.

Graham, from the Faculty of Engineering, is Director of the Special Research Centre for Integrated Dynamics and Control. The Centre combines diverse technologies including control, communications and information to improve the efficiency and competitiveness of Australian industries.

Graham’s research involves signal processing, feedback control and telecommunications. He was one of 14 Australian researchers recognised at an award ceremony in Canberra last month.

Professor Adrian Page has won the 2001 John B Scalzi Research Award, an international award presented annually by the Masonry Society, for his outstanding lifetime contribution to masonry research. The award was made at the Masonry Society’s annual meeting in St Louis in the USA last month.

A School of Population and Health Sciences research team has become the first in Australia to share the Thomas C Chalmers Award.

The 2001 prize, offered in the field of evidence-based medicine, was awarded to PhD student Annette Moxey, Dr Dianne O’Connell and Professor David Henry at the annual meeting of the Cochrane Colloquium in Lyon, France last month.

It is given to the best presentation at the annual scientific meeting of the Cochrane Collaboration and must contribute to the understanding and interpretation of information gained from reviewing results of research into the efficacy and safety of medical treatments (drugs and surgical procedures).

The researchers, supported by a grant from the National Health and Medical Research Council, investigated reasons for agreement and disagreement between different research designs.

The team concluded that research trials that did not assign patients to treatment or control on the basis of chance (the equivalent of a coin toss) can lead to mistaken conclusions about the benefits of drug treatments and operative procedures.

“Where researchers have not assigned patients to treatment on the basis of chance, selection factors can lead to over-optimistic conclusions about the value of the new medical treatment,” David said.

The work helps settle a debate that has been active in international medical journals in the last two years.

Mike O’Neill, Senior Electronics Officer in the School of Mathematical and Physical Sciences, won Best Documentary and the Nova Award for Best Overall local production in the Newcastle based National Video Awards held on October 9. Mike, who has been involved in the production of educational and promotional videos for the University since 1996, has largely taught himself video production and has won national awards for his work in the past.

Congratulations to Stefan Wein (Caretaker at International House), who won gold in his age division in the Downhill Mountain Biking at the recent Masters Games in Newcastle, and to other staff members who competed.

University staff competed in hang gliding, surfing, rowing, pistol shooting and sailing at the highly successful Games held in October.
Pioneering a Masters degree in a field never before attempted can be lonely, stressful and unguided. However, for Sonya Naumov, first graduate of the University's Master of Design, it was all worthwhile.

Originally enrolled in the University's Computer Science degree in 1990, Sonya had a last minute change of heart, and switched courses to a Bachelor of Arts (Visual Arts).

Completing her initial degree in 1993 (after an enforced leave of absence due to illness), Sonya converted her interest in nature illustration into a Graduate Diploma in Art (Plant and Wildlife Illustration).

Using this Diploma as a career springboard, Sonya was soon designing greeting cards and posters, and illustrating gardening and children's books. However, her initial interest in computers had not died, and in 1997 she embarked on a graduate thesis investigating how digital technology could be utilised as a tool in wildlife illustration and used in the dissemination of images to an audience.

Titled "Breaking Tradition: The Changing Face of Wildlife Illustration", the thesis examined the cost and time efficiency of using computer technology in wildlife illustration.

"It's turned out to be great for the publishing industry," said Sonya, who found that by using computers, she could cut the time spent working by up to half, and still create a realistic result – important in science illustration.

Sonya has found that there is a big market for people qualified in wildlife illustration, who can use their ability in both a scientific and artistic capacity. She works regularly for Better Homes and Gardens and has even designed a board game.

While she believes that self-promotion is one of the most important things an artist can do to gain employment, Sonya has found that her Masters' studies have opened up new doors. By gaining the necessary computer skills, Sonya has become involved with numerous websites, including becoming web director for a new site (www.getfittogolf.com.au) that analyses common golfing problems.

This has helped further her own business, Willoweb, a network she is setting up to help other wildlife artists and graphic designers find work. In the two years following her Graduate Diploma studies, Sonya was a demonstrator in the University's Department of Design, which she greatly enjoyed.

She has been teaching at Sydney WEA, and now hopes to continue her university career, by lecturing at Newcastle University.

"If you want to become an academic, you really have to do Honours," she explains.

The only one of its kind in the Southern hemisphere, the new Master of Design degree is expected to attract students from throughout the country.

"It's a bit more stressful," said Sonya, comparing her Master's studies to her Graduate Diploma. "It's all a new experience and it's quite exciting."

With no one preceding her, one of the things she had greatest difficulty with was knowing how much work was enough, and Sonya admits that she was probably too eager (having since been told she could have done a PhD with the amount of research she had done).

"We had a few hiccups," she said, "but it was worth it."
The University will miss the dynamism and leadership of Professor Jenny Graham, Director of the Enabling Programs Unit. Dr Ralph Robinson said at an External Relations farewell to Jenny last month.

"Jenny has energy, commitment and drive - no one knows how she does it - she is strategic, humane, cares about people and has a lifelong commitment to public health," Ralph said at the farewell function held in the Treehouse on October 3. "Jenny is a risk-taker and by that I mean she has the ability to see something new, to recognise we can do something differently... and not get stuck in a rut. That's a great characteristic."

Professor Jenny Graham came to the Hunter Institute of Higher Education (HIHE) in 1987 with the aim of establishing a health sciences program in Newcastle to break the monopoly of Sydney-based Cumberland College of Health Sciences (now part of the University of Sydney). The multi-faceted School of Health included nursing, social welfare, physical education, and recreation and tourism.

After graduating from the NSW College of Occupational Therapy in 1972, Jenny was involved in curriculum development and amalgamations at a range of institutions in Australia and the UK before taking on the task of building the School of Health. Under her supervision, the University introduced degree courses in Occupational Therapy, Nutrition and Dietetics, Nursing and Medical Radiation Science.

Following amalgamation in 1989, Jenny became Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences, a position which she occupied until 1993, when Health Sciences merged with Medicine. Jenny was given the role of Assistant Vice-Chancellor with the External Relations portfolio and in 1994 was made Pro Vice-Chancellor.

Director of the Development Unit Dr Bernie Curran said at the farewell that Jenny had two outstanding qualities.

"The first is leadership and that is a remarkable quality. Not many people have it but when it is there, people are prepared to follow. That is the reason why we are where we are as such a successful unit. The second thing is passion - for higher education and for the University. You will be taking that to another University and they will be lucky to get it."