Thousands of people flocked to the Central Coast and Callaghan campuses last month to enjoy the fair-like atmosphere of the University’s Open Days. Staff and students from every area of the University gave up their time to man a wide array of displays, demonstrations, stalls and exhibitions. We have tried to capture some of the colour and atmosphere of the Open Days in our pictorial features on page 8 (Central Coast Campus News) and page 10 and 11.
Vice-Chancellor's Column

My recent appointments to the Boards of the Hunter Area Health Service and the Hunter Institute of Technology have emphasised the importance for the University of establishing key partnerships with other major organisations in our region. Even though we are emphasising, as part of our annual strategic planning exercise, the increasing role of internationalisation in our teaching, research and service responsibilities, we must not neglect our local region which serves as the foundation stone for many of our activities.

The Hunter Area Health Service (HAHS) manages hospitals and health services within the Hunter Valley providing health care to more than half a million residents, as well as tertiary services to residents of north-eastern NSW. It is the largest employer in the Hunter Valley with more than 8000 employees, and has an annual operating budget of around $500m and assets of more than $600m.

There is extensive overlap between the activities of the University and those of HAHS, particularly in areas of education and training, research and development, and in the provision of health services in our community. Several hundred of our staff share appointments between the two institutions, which is seen as essential in the effective delivery of a modern practice- and evidence-based approach to medical, nursing and health science education programs. Many of the research programs of the relevant Faculties, including Medicine and Health Sciences, Nursing, Science and Mathematics and Law, are truly of a collaborative nature, and we would not be ranked ninth in research performance among Australian universities if we did not have a strong working relationship with HAHS across a number of our programs.

The recent establishment of Hunter Medical Research (HMR) as a joint venture with HAHS, supported by major community input, represents a new initiative to build on this strong collaboration. It will assist in our reaching an international level of performance in medical and health based research. The medium term goal is to establish a medical research institute of national and international standing in this area and to provide major additional funding, on a peer reviewed basis, to support our medical and health research programs. The HMR Board, which is Chaired by Geoff Leonard, has made an excellent start along the road of this establishment, resulting in a very successful launch on 2 June, and will make available initial funding later this year for research programs. I am sure that you all join with me in wishing HMR every success.

The Central Coast Area Health Service (CCAHS) is another important partner with the University in its teaching, research and service programs. This is reflected by the recent establishment of an agreement with CCAHS which provides a working framework for this collaboration. Of particular interest is the recent designation of the Gosford Hospital as a teaching hospital for the University and the upgrade of student and teaching facilities and support at the hospital. Through the excellent leadership of the Faculty of Nursing in establishing the hospital as a site for the delivery of undergraduate and postgraduate teaching, and in research, as well as the substantial teaching and clinical programs in medicine within the CCAHS, we have established a strong working relationship with this health service. I hope it will develop further and extend into other areas in the near future.

Our relationship with the Hunter Institute of Technology (HIT) is also of major importance to the University, particularly in association with our joint venture at the Central Coast Campus at Ourimbah. We also have connections in a growing number of other academic areas through published and agreed articulation arrangements and the development of joint programs in areas of overlapping interest. This is especially the case for programs in hospitality management, information technology and in viticulture, where mutually agreed plans are at an advanced stage for having joint qualifications. HIT has more than 47,000 students spread across 16 campuses within the Hunter and Central Coast regions, and it is clearly to our mutual advantage to collaborate and to extend our growing relationships.

I see these relationships developing further for the mutual benefit of the University and our local partners. Partnerships with organisations outside the region will also need to be explored, particularly those that will assist our aspirations of moving the University to the next level of achievement as a truly international university in teaching, research, postgraduate training, and in service.

Any assistance you can give the University in promoting and succeeding in its collaborations with local major institutions will be appreciated.
University’s $600 million economic contribution

The University contributes more than $600 million to the economy of the Hunter region each year, a Hunter Valley Research Foundation report has shown. It is responsible for 3,231 jobs in the region, with 1,998 people directly employed by the University, another 403 created by direct spending and a further 830 created by the stimulus to production and consumption.

Vice-Chancellor, Roger Holmes, said the report showed the far-reaching influence the University exerts on the Hunter’s economy. “By examining the use and expenditure on power and other services, the report has been able to calculate the direct input into other important local industries,” he said.

Estimates of spending by students only looked at the 7,000 who came into the region to go to the University and ignored the 12,000 who were from the area. The report found the University and the students injected about $63 million into the retail sector and almost $11 million into accommodation, cafes and restaurants.

The report, The University of Newcastle: An Assessment of its Economic Impact on the Hunter Region, only examined the impact of the University in the Hunter and did not look at the impact created by the Central Coast Campus. Compiled by economist Robin McDonald, the report was the first detailed study undertaken into the University’s economic impact on the region.

A message of tolerance

A program being run in conjunction with the University’s Aboriginal Employment Strategy* is offering staff a valuable insight into Aboriginal culture. Designed for both academic and general staff, the Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Program provides participants with a heightened awareness of the issues confronting Aboriginal people today and the historical events that have influenced them.

Fair Work Practices Manager, Vincia Martin, said the program was formulated by Fred Maher in conjunction with staff from Wollotuka and is an integral part of the employment strategy. “We realised that it was important to raise awareness of cultural issues relating to Aboriginal people amongst the staff they would be working with. We see this as critical to the success of the strategy,” Vincia said. “The participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders is a core value of the University. We think that every member of staff would benefit from attending the program.”

Run since October last year, the program involves groups of up to 20 people in a full day of workshops, exercises and discussions facilitated by Aboriginal staff members. Warden of Evatt House, Dr Bill Jones, who attended the program in June, said he found it excellent and had most enjoyed the interaction with the academic and administrative staff who had attended. “I have a firm commitment to Aboriginal people and believe strongly in reconciliation,” he said. “The message put across by the presenters is one of tolerance, not one of white bashing, but a message of harmony.”

Associate Professor Diana Keatinge from the Faculty of Nursing found that the program gave her good background information to some of the issues that are on the national agenda today, such as the Wik debate and land rights. “The historical events were presented in a factual, unemotive way,” she said. “The information was presented in a way where there was no blaming. As a teacher I found it good to see where the differences in Aboriginal thinking and learning come from.”

Associate Professor Jo Walton, also from nursing, said that her New Zealand heritage made her expect issues relating to indigenous culture to be ‘challenging’. “I was quite surprised at how gentle the presenters were,” she said. “They could have been much more confronting. Any heat generated tended to be between the participants in the program.” Jo was impressed with the reading list that accompanied the program documentation.

There are six more awareness program days scheduled for this year, including two for the Central Coast Campus. If you are interested in finding out more or in registering to attend, contact Kerrie Matterson on Ext 6547, email: kmatters@mail.newcastle.edu.au.

*The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy is jointly funded by the University and the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs.
Thai royal family scholarship

Reducing dietary fat - easier said than done

High fat diets have been implicated in the development of many chronic and prevalent diseases and health authorities recommend that our intake of fat should be reduced to less than 30% of total energy. Surveys have shown that most of us would agree that the high fat content of our diets is a major health concern but actually doing something to change our diet is easier said than done.

It takes changes in attitude and behaviour to bring about dietary changes. Understanding the stages of change may help health workers to introduce interventions that help people overcome the barriers to change. Researchers from the Discipline of Nutrition and Dietetics and the Department of Psychology, at the University have undertaken a study that compares people across the stages of change while taking into account the need for taking these phases of change into account in nutrition advice,” Gay said. “Dietary fat intake and barriers to reducing fat intake decreased significantly across the stages of change while the benefits to change increased significantly.”

The results showed the Precontemplation group to be the largest (33%) with the Contemplation stage the smallest (6%). Males were much more likely to be in the Precontemplation stage than females and females reported a significantly lower intake of dietary fat. Respondents were also assessed on their knowledge of dietary fat. Despite the fact that 74 percent of the staff members taking part in the survey had tertiary qualifications, the knowledge scores surprised the researchers. “The results indicate that even a highly educated group such as this university sample lack some basic knowledge about dietary fat,” Gay said. “The findings suggest that an emphasis on knowledge of nutritional terms such as saturated or polyunsaturated could be questioned. It may be more relevant to assess knowledge in terms of food choice.”

A research article outlining the study results, “Stages of Change and Reduction of Dietary Fat: Effect of Knowledge and Attitudes in an Australian University Population”, was published in the Journal of Nutrition Education this year.

“The next stage will be to look at one of the stages of change, for instance the Contemplators who said they were planning to make changes to the amount of fat in their diet in the next six months, and track them to see if they did move on to the next stage,” Gay said. “This could help us to understand what enabled them to do this and may lead to an intervention study. We intend to invite University staff to participate again.”
Going for broadcasting gold

by Christina Atherton

Think back to where you were the day Kieran Perkins won gold against amazing odds at the 1996 Atlanta Olympic games. You probably remember sitting in front of the television as Kieran swam those final laps. The television images took us closer to the pool than any spectator could hope.

The Sydney Olympic Broadcasting Organisation (SOBO) will employ 3200 broadcast operators and technicians to deliver all the magic of the 2000 games to an estimated global television audience of 25 billion. The University has been chosen to take part in a series of SOBO workshops to train students in broadcasting techniques in the lead up to Sydney 2000.

Thirty communication and visual arts students from the University took part in the first of the week-long workshops in June. Work-based lectures by industry professionals provided the students with an insight into how the games will be broadcast. They learned about the nature and history of the sports involved as well as gaining hands on experience using broadcasting equipment.

The 180 broadcast organisations that hold the television and radio rights (including Channel 7 in Australia) will have access to 3200 hours of uncut footage of the 28 Olympic events. During the Games, SOBO will become the largest broadcast organisation in the world.

Newcastle is one of six universities taking part in the SOBO workshops. Trainee camera and audio assistants were taught the secrets of filming, sound recording and editing sporting events using an outside broadcast van. Students were then tested on the theoretical and practical aspects of broadcasting and were interviewed by training organiser, Rachel Masters. Successful students have been “targeted” as potential recruits with confirmation of final positions expected early in 2000.

Those who are chosen will go to Sydney a fortnight before the games to help assemble equipment and to brush up on SOBO broadcasting techniques. During the 16 days of competition they may cover any of the events, from boxing to synchronised swimming. To gain invaluable experience for their future careers as well as playing a part in the Olympic dream is the opportunity of a lifetime. The chance to be at the forefront of the action and be a part of Olympic and Australian history has many of the Newcastle students starting the countdown to 2000!

*Christina, a first year student in the Bachelor of Arts (Communication Studies), is taking part in the SOBO workshops.
Laurel Williams, Director of Wollotuka, the University’s Aboriginal Education Centre, is passionate about Aboriginal education. Some have even found her excessive in her passion. But after 20 years of working at different levels and in different organisations, she is convinced that education is a crucial factor not only in improving the lives of Aboriginal people but also in reconciliation.

"From my experience, I’ve been able to develop personally in what I perceive as the big picture for Aboriginal education and the way in which education provides a tool for individuals and communities to develop," Laurel said. "I’m happy to have ended up at university level. There’s a certain level of professional recognition that comes with university study that can be taken to resource and develop Aboriginal communities."

Laurel is a Biripi woman, who calls Forster on the NSW north coast “the centre of the universe”. She began her career in education as a teaching assistant at a Karuah primary school before making a decision to get her teaching qualification. "I worked full time at DEETYA while I was studying because I was a single mother and needed to work," she said. She completed her Bachelor of Teaching at the University of Western Sydney (Macarthur) through an Aboriginal rural education program. Her work experience has included positions in TAFE, the school education system and in universities. She has a Master’s in Education from Wollongong University.

"I applied for an exciting project at Newcastle - to write curriculum from an Aboriginal perspective for the social work degree," Laurel says of her decision to move to Newcastle. "It was a change of direction for me because I’d been in management positions for awhile. I was really interested in being involved in educating other people and preparing professional people to deal with Aboriginal communities."

The move from Sydney also brought her closer to her family at Forster. Laurel produced a teaching unit for the social work degree and compiled resource materials to support it, as well as doing some teaching in the program. "I really enjoyed it and I produced two videos to go with it," she said. "The best thing about it is that the lecturer says the material is very successful and unlike some resources that just sit on a shelf, it is actually being used."

Since coming to Newcastle, Laurel has sat as a co-commissioner for NSW on the national inquiry into the removal of Aboriginal children and has been involved with Newcastle City Council on reconciliation commitments. She is a life member of the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, a 22 year old community based organisation that advises state ministers on education issues. As Director of Wollotuka Laurel tries to remember the connection between her professional position and the community. "I’m very conscious of making sure that whatever happens reflects community needs, whatever they might be," she said. She is also head of the Department of Aboriginal Studies. Laurel says Newcastle has always been among the leaders in terms of encouraging curriculum development in Aboriginal education and thinks Wollotuka and the Discipline of Aboriginal Health Studies have played a big part in that. The addition of the Umulliko Indigenous Higher Education Centre is another exciting development. "I look forward to what comes out of there in terms of postgraduate success as well as the things that can be achieved in areas of research," she said.

"We are all looking forward to getting our new building as well."

Laurel isn’t only stimulated by what’s happening on campus, however. "I think that the political climate makes it a very exciting time in the history of Aboriginal education," she said. "What a certain person is doing is putting important items on the social agenda nationally and that gives me a strange sort of extra drive to give people the facts."
The University’s Physical Planning and Estates (PPE) section is in the final stages of planning for the soon to be built Link Building. Named because it will provide a link between the Medical Sciences building and the Biological Sciences building, the new structure will cost $13.7 million to build and will be completed in time for the start of the academic year in 2000.

Staff architect for the project, Scott Chalmers, said the need for the building arose from the development of two new degrees, the Bachelor of Science (Biotechnology) and the Bachelor of Medical Technology, that are offered cooperatively by the Faculties of Science and Mathematics and Medicine and Health Sciences.

PPE ran a competition for the design of the building and were interested when two of the three entries suggested a solution that was quite different to that originally proposed. “The site we had in mind involved extending the Biological Sciences building to the west to link with the Medical Sciences Building,” Scott explained. “But two of the three proposals put the building between the Medical Sciences Building and the Auchmuty Library.” This site provided a better solution for the Faculties as it linked Medical Sciences with Biological Sciences and with Chemistry. The winning design was a collaborative submission by Suters Architects and Stutchbury Pape.

“It’s a very expensive site to use because we need to retain access to the Library and to a substation on the road underneath it,” Scott explained. The building, however, would be inherently expensive due to the level of servicing and equipment involved. It will include physical containment laboratories (PC2s and PC3s) from which no contaminants can escape. These labs require a separate air conditioning system. They require high level data outlets and are wet labs with a drainage system that is resistant to contaminants. “We have tried to build some flexibility into the design so that new research requirements can be accommodated in the future,” Scott said.

The Link Building will start almost three stories above the ground and is three storeys high at its highest point. It will house a 120 seat lecture theatre, offices and tutorial rooms and will have a courtyard in the middle. There will be connections at three points to Medical Sciences levels 4, 5 and 6 and to the middle and top floors of Biological Sciences. A ramp from one end will connect the building to Chemistry as well as providing disabled access to all three buildings in the process. The offices and public spaces will be naturally ventilated as part of the University’s energy policy.

Dr Brian Conroy, Head of Biological Sciences, says the lowest floor of the new building will be used for teaching, with a large biotechnical undergraduate laboratory included. The middle floor would be used by Medicine and Health Sciences and the top floor would house biology researchers, including a new Professor, John Aitken. “It is a cooperative facility and the extra space is very much needed,” Brian said. “We have been waiting for this extension since 1994 and with science staff spread out all over the campus, it will be great to get them together in the same precinct.”

Work on the new building is expected to start before the end of the year.
Horrendous weather conditions leading up to the event caused the Open Day, originally to be held on Sunday, 9 August, to be postponed to the following Sunday. Although the weather turned sour again on the day, Open Day went ahead - in the rain!

Thousands of people attended anyway and a busy program of activities rewarded them for braving the rain. Staff rallied to the cause, making sure that the program that was originally planned was still in place for the postponed date.

Demonstrations and displays from every academic area challenged and informed. Art exhibitions, life model drawing classes, jazz, a capella singing groups, food sensory testing, wine tasting, massage and reflexology demonstrations, a wonderful display of Irish dancing and a host of other activities entertained and captivated.

"Banford the Cow", the campus mascot, was slightly disconcerted when curious children insisted on squeezing its udder. Banford was joined by a happy band of gorillas, bears, chickens, frogs and a couple of lazy fairies.

Reports coming in after the event paint a picture of academic staff and other demonstrators being run off their feet, particularly in the Information Technology area where there seemed to be extraordinary interest. Course advisers and faculty representatives were also kept very busy all day answering the myriad of questions and providing information about opportunities and options for study.

It was a good opportunity for the Central Coast Campus to open its doors to the public as it is on the brink of realising its full potential in terms of buildings and facilities. So in spite of the rain, wind and soggy conditions, the Open Day at the Central Coast Campus was a success and achieved its aim of earning public understanding and appreciation of its role in the community.
Exporting health education to China

A delegation from China's Xi'an Medical University visited the University last month in a bid to strengthen teaching and research ties between the two countries.

The Xi'an University has already modelled its medical program on the highly successful problem-based learning approach adopted by the Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences.

"This visit reinforces Xi'an Medical University's commitment to cementing its relationship with the University, not only in the field of medicine, but also nursing," explained Pro-Vice Chancellor (External Relations), Professor Jenny Graham.

Xi'an Medical University President, Professor Ren Hui Min, and Chairman of its Nursing Department, Professor Shao Weiwei, inspected the University's facilities on August 7, before signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Vice-Chancellor. "Such an agreement is of tremendous value to the University because it provides opportunities for collaborative research and teaching in the areas of medicine, nursing and health sciences," Professor Holmes said.

Last month's meeting follows a recent visit by an Australian delegation, headed by Professor Holmes, to a number of Chinese universities, including Xi'an.

"It was during this visit that we realised the many possibilities for collaboration between the two institutions," Professor Holmes explained. "Xi'an University had already modelled its medical program on that pioneered by the University, and interest had also been expressed in some of the initiatives the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences has undertaken on an international scale."

Singing up a storm with the master

One of the world's greatest masters of the singing voice visited Newcastle last month to share his knowledge and skills with some of the region's most promising singers.

Dr Clayne Robison has spent the past thirty years performing the world over, including appearances with the Moscow and St Petersburg Symphony Orchestras and various Operas around the United States. He has a particular interest in church music, playing the bass role in performances of Verdi's Requiem and The Creation by Haydn, and releasing a CD entitled Sabbath Song.

"He not only has a magnificent baritone voice, but is an inspiring teacher," Kay Capewell, Head of Vocal Studies at the Faculty of Music, said. "He encourages new depths in his students' voices, helping them to realise their full potential."

The 30 students who are majoring in vocal studies within the Faculty benefited from Dr Robison's guidance during a series of Master Classes in August. The classes were highly practical, not only giving the students the chance to hear Dr Robison, but to also sing to, and alongside, the Master.

"It's exciting to have a singer of such calibre available to us. We have outstanding staff within the Vocal Studies Department, and Dr Robison's visit offers the opportunity for our students to enhance their learning," Dean of the Faculty, Professor Robert Constable, explained.

During his visit Dr Robison also gave a lunchtime recital on August 7 at the Conservatorium Concert Hall. His visit was sponsored jointly by Tantara Records and the University. Dr Robison teaches in the School of Music at Brigham Young University in Utah, USA, where he has been Professor of Voice since 1982.
Open day
Thousands of people took part in Open Day events at the Callaghan campus last month. Staff and student volunteers were kept busy all over the University, but particularly in the course information area in the Brennan Room at the Shortland Union.

"Open Day provides an ideal opportunity for community members to come onto campus and look around," Director of Marketing and Media Services, Fran Flavel said. "The rain held off most of the day and all the organised activities seemed to be well attended."

The paper aeroplane competition organised by the Faculty of Science and Mathematics proved very popular with almost 100 schools from the region competing and more than 1,000 people attending the finals in the Great Hall on Open Day. St Francis Xavier High won first prize in the high school division, which involved launching the paper 'plane from a mechanical device, with Morisset Public winning the Year 4-6 division and Toukley Public winning the K-3 section.

Other activities included displays and demonstrations, face painting and a jumping castle for the kids, art exhibitions, science shows, cultural festival activities and a range of sporting activities in the Forum.

The Open Day passport competition was won by Ken Midson of East Maitland, who won a five-night holiday for two to Cairns.
Microscope that sees individual atoms

The Physics Department has taken delivery of a $600,000 microscope that is capable of allowing researchers to view individual atoms. The Scanning Tunnelling Microscope, which has been at the University since May, is one of only about 200 worldwide and three or four in Australia and is amongst the most advanced of its kind.

Associate Professor John O'Connor said the microscope would be used in the work of the surface physics group at the University. “When we commissioned the system, we were working with single crystal silicon but it has a wide range of applications,” John said. “While most of the applications relate to physics, there are people in chemistry and in engineering whose work will be tied up with this.”

The majority of the funding for the microscope ($400,000) came from a Federal government research infrastructure equipment grant, with $175,000 coming from the University and the remainder ($7,000) from BHP.

The new equipment should impact on the surface physics group in several ways, John said. Firstly, it will attract international researchers to the University. “The surface physics group has attracted four international experts to Newcastle for extended visits this year due to the combination of our expertise and the equipment we have developed,” he said. Secondly, the equipment will strengthen the reputation of the group internationally as they publish papers on their research which should attract more students, both from within Australia and from overseas. John hopes that working with the microscope will also impact on research funding. “It should improve our chances of attracting research funding and I expect it will feed into the total health of the group,” he said.

Nuclear waste solutions save US Government a trillion dollars

The University has been called in by consultants Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) to help solve an expensive nuclear waste problem for the US Government in New York State. The North West Valley Nuclear Service Centre is a disposal and storage site for low level nuclear waste.

Dr Garry Willgoose of the Department of Civil, Surveying and Environmental Engineering, is providing software and technical advice to help the US Department of Energy to determine the site’s geological stability.

Under US regulations, the geological stability of any such site has to be guaranteed for one thousand years. However an initial study of the site found the North West Valley Service Centre would become untenable much sooner. The concern is that the site will be exposed because of erosion and other geological conditions in the area. As a result, the site will have to be cleared of all waste material.

Because there is currently no permanent solution available, the waste would have to be stored in a temporary site, like a special warehouse, until a new solution can be found. The US Department of Energy has put the cost of transferring the waste to a temporary storage facility at one trillion (one million million) US dollars. That’s one quarter of the United States’ Gross National Product.

The prohibitive cost forced the Department to look for other solutions, Garry said. One alternative he suggested would be to temporarily leave it in the ground, if this could be done safely until a cost-effective permanent solution could be found.

“It’s a matter of accurately determining how many years the site can remain viable,” he said. “After a worldwide search the Department shortlisted M.I.T and the University of Newcastle to assist with researching that viability. We were chosen because of our expertise in the mining industry and because of our unique software, which was developed here in Newcastle.”
Seeking a cure for the common cold

Dr Darrin Shafren from the Discipline of Immunology and Microbiology has been named 1998 Young Medical Researcher of the Year for his research aimed at combating the virus responsible for the common cold.

His project, which is in its fourth year, aims to block the virus responsible for the common cold from bonding with a cell. “The first step involved in viral infection is for the virus to stick to the cell surface,” Darrin said. “In collaboration with the Queensland Institute of Medical Research, I have been examining ways to prevent the rhinovirus attaching to molecules.”

The research represents a novel way of approaching the problem that has defeated medical science up to now. “We have had some nice preliminary findings and have been able to block the virus adhering to the cell using drugs and proteins in the test tube,” Darrin said. “In time we hope to formulate a drug that people, especially those who are susceptible to colds or asthma, can take at various times of the year that may reduce the severity and frequency of their attacks.”

Darrin, a virologist and cell biologist, said the virus responsible for the common cold was part of a family of around 200 structurally similar viruses that resemble soccer balls in shape. “We are working on the whole family and by formulating a way to prevent viruses sticking to cells, we hope to combat a range of conditions including viral meningitis in children and myocardial heart disorder.”

The research project is funded by National Health and Medical Research Council. Darrin was presented with the Young Researcher of the Year Award at a Hunter Medical Research lunch in July. He received $5,000 to continue the research.

Winter Warm-up

Left to right: Jill Donnan with daughter, Raelene Tony and Coralie Lewis Ann and Norm George

Hunter/Chancellery Staff Association members and their families and friends staved off the winter chill at their Winter Warm-up Get Together held at the Silver Dolphin Restaurant at Cardiff Workers Club on July 31.
Who said universities don’t have a heart?

Colin Ridley is philosophical about the 1992 rugby league accident that left him a quadriplegic. “It’s not the game that’s at fault, it was just an accident,” Colin, now 27, said. “It was a shock but you have to get on with your life.”

The Student and Academic Services Division at the University is doing its bit to help Colin get on with his life by donating a computer to him. They responded to a request from the Community Options Programme of the Hunter Area Health Service to provide the computer.

Programme Coordinator, Alison Maxwell, said Colin is keen to write his story. “I’ve met a number of young people with a range of disabilities and I believe that the way in which Colin has faced the result of his accident and picked up his life is inspirational,” Alison said.

The computer, a 486, with keyboard, monitor and mouse, will also allow Colin to access the Internet and play games, which will help combat the isolation some disabled people feel. Although with twin three year old sons and his wife Lisa having just given birth to their third son, Colin isn’t likely to suffer too much from isolation!

“I was really surprised when the University gave me the computer,” Colin said. “There’s no way we could have afforded something like this. I want to get Microsoft Word onto it and then I’ll try and write a book. I’ve got plenty of time here doing nothing and it will keep me occupied.”

Colin has been fitted with splints to enable him to operate the computer and is being given lessons by Paraquad.

Beating the winter blues – as easy as Vitamin D₃?

Is winter making you depressed, irritable and tired? If so, could taking vitamin D₃ make you happier and able to think more clearly? That’s the question PhD student Allen Lansdowne and Dr Stephen Provost from the Psychology Department are hoping to answer.

“We know that during winter, sleeping and eating patterns are disturbed, and people are more likely to be anxious and depressed,” Allen said.

The two researchers have already completed a study of the link between moods and Vitamin D₃, which is accessed by the body via sunlight; foods such as tuna, salmon and dairy products; and by taking supplements. The research involved 45 healthy people, some of whom were given Vitamin D₃ supplements, while others received placebos.

“The results showed that the people who took the vitamin supplements had an improved mood compared with those who took the placebos,” Stephen said.

While the research focussed specifically on mood, it also pointed to a possible change in cognitive function in the people who took the vitamin supplements. This is now being examined as part of Allen’s studies, which are supported by a University of Newcastle Research Scholarship.

“Through the Human Brain Research Laboratory we hope to test around thirty people, using two simple experiments – one that monitors electrical activity in the brain, and the other, the participants’ ability to attend to simple tasks,” Stephen explained.

“We are trying to determine if Vitamin D₃ alters electrical activity in the brain – and therefore if taking the supplement might improve attention, and by how much,” Allen added.

There has been little focus on the effects of D₃ on mood and attention from a psychological perspective, and the researchers are hoping to marry their information with that from overseas research into the effect the vitamin has on brain chemistry.
Margaret Senior Award winner

The 15th annual Margaret Senior Award was presented to Art and Design student, Hannah Finlay, at the end of July. Hannah, pictured with her work, was presented with her $1,000 award by National Parks and Wildlife Service director general, Brian Gilligan.

The award, which was set up from a scholarship fund left by well known Hunter wildlife illustrator, the late Margaret Senior, is aimed at students doing the Plant and Wildlife Illustration course. The one year course is the only one of its kind in Australia. Graduates are qualified to work as illustrators with organisations such as the CSIRO and the Australian Museum.

The keys to literacy

State and Federal Government campaigns to tackle literacy problems amongst school children should also be focussed on babies and young children who are learning to communicate, according to Dr Berenice Mathisen.

A specialist in speech-language pathology, Berenice said around 50 percent of Australian children who have a speech and language disorder will have difficulty learning to read and spell when they start school.

"It stands to reason that the most effective means of tackling the problem of literacy is to address any speech and language disorders when they first arise. It's the classic case of the prevention being better than the cure," Berenice explained.

She said that from our first year of life we are learning to communicate - and that getting it right in the beginning is the key to reducing the chances of literacy problems later in life. "We think in language and pictures in our minds - reading and writing are the next levels. If the oral language is not there, or is imperfect, there is a poor base on which to build written language," she said.

The key to reducing the chance of a child having literacy problems is for the parents to seek help if they feel their child has trouble with his or her speech. "It is crucial to get help early. Don't be deterred by well-meaning friends who suggest your child will grow out of it - seek help now," she said.

Speech pathologists are professionals who assess and treat speech and language difficulties so that children with these problems can make the most of their learning time. Infants under 12 months demonstrate awareness and interest in sounds and words and should be encouraged by parents through activities such as teaching nursery rhymes; sharing books with their children. Later, teaching young children not only the names of all the letters in the alphabet but also what sound each letter makes, e.g. the letter J says "j" as in jump, helps lay the foundation for spelling, reading and writing skills.
Tourism, Leisure, Sport: Critical Perspectives
Edited by David Rowe and Geoffrey Lawrence
1998
Hodder Education, Australia
RRP: $39.95
Reviewed by Willem Oostdyck*

Tourism is increasingly linked to other phenomena such as sport and leisure. All three areas have origins to early history and all three have undergone dramatic changes in the last few years. Only since the late 80s and 90s has study and research proliferated in the disciplines of Tourism, Leisure, and Sport. The majority of Australian universities offer some kind of program in either or all of the disciplines.

Tourism, Leisure, Sport: Critical Perspectives is a collection of essays which offer a critical perspective of tourism, leisure and sport with particular focus on inequality, globalisation, culture and authenticity, and the Sydney Olympic Games. A final theme termed “margins” attempts to go beyond the traditional approach of study to include issues on “free” time, space and cultural identity. The text is arranged under the three topics of Tourism, Leisure and Sport.

In Chapter One the editors present an interesting argument suggesting that tourism, leisure and sport have become intrinsically part of our lives. As they explain “tourism, leisure, and sport have taken up a place in the centre of contemporary social life, weaving together the disparate strands of work, play, politics and culture into a complex fabric of power and pleasure”. However the authors fail to provide a paradigm to illustrate the relationship between the three phenomena.

The book covers a wide range of contemporary issues. It presents a balanced view of post-modern Australia and the rapid growth of tourism phenomenon. In her essay, titled “Selling the Dreamtime: Aboriginal culture in Australian tourism”, Heather Zeppel explores the development of Indigenous tourist enterprises and promotional campaigns. She focuses on cultural dilemmas posed by incorporating Australian society within a global tourism industry. Rob Lynch presents a clear description of casino development in Australia in his paper “Australian casinos: Gambling with tourism and leisure?”. Lynch preludes with a historical review on casino development in Australia, and goes on to discuss the “moral desirability” and “social consequences” and the way casino gambling has been “camouflaged” with the lure of tourism, leisure and entertainment opportunities.

The final paper under the topic of tourism is by David Rowe who explores the promotion globally of the Australian image in the lead up to the Sydney 2000 Games. The focus of this discussion is an “examination of economic, social and cultural consequences of the development of international tourism in Australia in the light of the forthcoming millennium Games”. The intriguing title “Tourism, ‘Australianness’ and Sydney 2000” suggests a certain appeal (whether positive or negative) as a tourist destination.

The second section of the text addresses the issue of leisure. The authors Brown and Rowe advance a critical discussion on contemporary leisure and argue that “there is evidence of both significant continuities and changes in the ways in which Australians use their leisure time”. Authors Ray Hibbins, Kevin Markwell and Deborah Stevenson have papers in this section which concludes with David Rowe addressing the issue of Australia as a leisure nation.

The final section of the text addresses the phenomena of sport and commences with a paper by Rowe and Lawrence titled “Framing a critical sports sociology in the age of globalisation”. They discuss the “deep problems for any adequate understanding of contemporary Australian sport posed by the process of globalisation and the conditioning of postmodernity”.

The book presents a diversity of essays which critically explore the three phenomena of tourism, leisure and sport. While it is aimed at undergraduates, research students and teachers, the richness and complexity of several of the topics would make it difficult to comprehend by beginning readers or first year students. As such the authors, in introducing their essays, should have provided some clear definitions. This may be achieved through illustration of a paradigm depicting the relationship between tourism, leisure and sport. The length of essays in the text is insufficient in depth for the book to be considered as a set text, however it is most useful as a supplementary text in undergraduate or postgraduate study.

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School of Tourism and Hospitality Management
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Focus on the individual

Ask most psychologists whether their discipline owes its allegiance to science or to the humanities and the majority will resoundingly tell you it is a science. Associate Professor Bill Warren from the Faculty of Education, however, prefers a view of psychology that recognises links with general philosophy and a broader understanding of science, that of Personal Construct Psychology (PCP).

In his book, Philosophical Dimensions of Personal Construct Psychology, Bill explores PCP. Formulated by George Kelly in the mid-1950s, PCP addresses rather than avoids philosophical questions. “It is true to the human condition and to our own experience of being human that we align ourselves as much to poetry and history as we do to chemistry and physics,” Bill explained. “We are beings seeking meaning and PCP is an approach that starts with the individual and with the meaning it gives to some event or situation in their lives.”

PCP is a theory of human behaviour that is in the grand scale of Freudian psychology and the older psychological theorists who took a broad view of behaviour. It lends itself to a discussion of behaviour in a broader context - the canvas of human functioning, that includes religion, culture and individual experience.

Bill discovered PCP “by accident” during his education and training in clinical psychology some 20 years ago. “It appeared to offer a congenial way of thinking about individual lived-experience in a most thoroughgoing way,” he said. “It appeared also to be consistent with the types of ideas generated in the anarcho-psychological tradition of western thought with which I
had become familiar." Thus he developed an interest in probing PCP for its links to the ideas generated in this tradition and in social philosophy generally.

In an intellectual climate that accepts a more collective view of the human being, Bill focuses on the individual, whose sense of difference is more interesting for him than any efforts to chart the characteristics an individual might share with others. It is a more humanistic perspective, he explained, but one rooted in the hermeneutic tradition and accepting principles of systematic enquiry. One of the quotes that open his newly published book reflects that it is both the individual and the group that are the ultimate focus of PCP:

One cannot understand a spoken statement without knowing both its most general and its most personal and particular value. Schleiermacher, 1977

Philosophical Dimensions of Personal Construct Psychology will provide counsellors, therapists and students of PCP with a broader application of its historical and philosophical context and its importance to contemporary psychology. Bill was granted leave from the University to prepare the manuscript for his book, which was published last month as part of the prestigious Routledge Progress in Psychology series.

South Maitland Railways Archive Heritage Grant

The University has obtained a State Heritage Grant to carry out valuable conservation work on the South Maitland Railways archive, and make it more accessible to researchers and the wider community. The $11,500 grant was made on the recommendation of the New South Wales Heritage Council.

The South Maitland line was an important railway, carrying vast quantities of coal and large numbers of passengers. "The South Maitland Railways archive, housed in the University's Archives and Special Collections unit, dates from the 1890's when the South Maitland coalfield was being opened up," explained Denis Rowe, Manager, Archives and Special Collections.

A Researchers' Guide to the archive will soon be published on the World Wide Web, as well as in hardcopy, with the collection expected to attract international interest. Denis said the project would significantly widen the community's understanding of social, business and transport history in NSW, as well as provide primary source material to support other preservation initiatives.

Many of the records that show signs of floodwater damage will receive conservation treatment. These include legal records, correspondence, employees' registers, financial records, timetables, coal tonnage books, maps, plans, and unique drawings of locomotives, rolling stock and locomotive workshops.

The Archives and Special Collections Unit houses extraordinarily rich and diverse collections. The heritage grant assists the University in preserving unique and rare materials that are valuable for learning and research.

On completion of the project the South Maitland Railway archive will complement another remarkable collection - the business archive dating from the 1840's of the legendary Hunter Valley Coal Masters J & A Brown, also held at the University Archives.

AARNet Large Object Mirror

The Australian Academic and Research Network (AARNet) Large Object Mirror contains archives of popular software for Unix, x86 PCs and Macintosh. You can access it using your web browser (eg. Netscape Navigator) via the URL http://mirror.aar.net.edu.au/

Use of this mirror site has both performance and cost benefits to the University. Files obtained from this site are fetched directly using only the AARNet carrier links provided by Optus (high bandwidth and fast), and the traffic is charged at "on network domestic" rates (85% less than the standard "international traffic" rate). You should consider bookmarking this site and using it to download popular software packages.

Tony Nicholson
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Faculty Librarians - what we can do for you

Faculty Librarians form part of the Information Services team of the Client Services Program within IESD and are responsible for ensuring the information needs of their particular faculties are met. They are subject information specialists and can advise on the best strategies for efficient and effective information access including advice on literature searches and research techniques. They also act as conduits of information between the faculties and departments and IESD, and can advise on the services of the whole Division and provide referrals.

In conjunction with the Information Access Manager, the Faculty Librarians are able to advise faculties and departments on the best use of library allocations including an appropriate ratio of expenditure between print and electronic resources.

Responsibility for the information needs of non-faculty based sections of the University is also assigned to the Faculty Librarians. They provide research advice and information services to general staff and those not attached to a faculty.

Individual or small group consultations for staff are available by appointment with your relevant Faculty Librarian. Alternatively, contact the Information Services Team Coordinator, Peter Sidorko ext 6668, for further information.

See the Web page http://www.library.newcastle.edu.au/library/contact.html or the list of Faculty Librarians.
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What's On

Friday 25 September
Graduation ceremonies for the Callaghan and Central Coast Campuses will be held in the Great Hall, Callaghan Campus on as follows:
10.30am Faculties: Arts and Social Science, Law, Education, Medicine and Health Sciences, Engineering, Science and Mathematics.
2.30pm Faculties: Architecture, Music, Art and Design, Nursing, Economics and Commerce
Contact: Robert Milan Ext 6490, rmilar@mail.newcastle.edu.au
Joanne Beveridge Ext 6356 sjdb@adim.newcastle.edu.au
The next graduation ceremonies will be held in April/May 1999 on the Callaghan and Central Coast Campuses.

21-24 September
Sixth International Conference and Workshop Positionization Techniques in Surface Analysis Venue The Holiday Inn Esplanade - Newcastle NSW Contact A/Prof Bruce King, The Department of Physics, The University of Newcastle Tel: 02-4921-5448, Fax: 02-4921-6907 Email: phbvk@cc.newcastle.edu.au
ATEM (the Association of Tertiary Education Managers) is the only professional association for administrators and managers working in tertiary education in Australasia. There is an active group at the University which meets regularly for lunch-time seminars (lunch included) on a range of topics relevant to general staff. Upcoming seminars include:

Thursday 10 September
Speaker: Geoff Barcan
Topic: The University’s Web Page: Where it’s at and where it’s headed

Thursday 15 October
Speaker: TBA

Topic: The Millennium Bug: What will it mean for the University?

Friday 13 November
Details TBA

Wednesday 16 December
Speaker: Professor Roger Holmes, Vice-Chancellor

If you would like to become a member or to find out more, please contact the Campus Liaison Officer, David Donnelly, ext.5561, email ddonnell@paracelsus.7-10 April 1999

Fifth International Multi-disciplinary Qualitative Health Research Conference University of Newcastle Contact Prof Irena Madjar, Faculty of Nursing -Tel 61-2-4921 7043; Fax: 61-2-4921 6981 Email: pnim@cc.newcastle.edu.au

University web pages worth keeping an eye on

On the University’s web site we have a Calendar of Events and an Announcements page. Both of these pages can be navigated to from the ‘Information for Staff’ menu page, or directly using the following web addresses:

Available for Rent
15 December to 1 July 1999
Three bedroom house with large study. Situated in Dudley - light and breezy house with two floors overlooks the ocean with views from Newcastle and Stockton to Redhead. Very large study, large open plan living area with balconies front and back. Three bedrooms and two bathrooms. The house will be fully furnished and use of linen, crockery, etc is negotiable. Walking distance to beach 15-20 minutes.
Enquiries to Professor Jette Kalma, ext 5736, email: cejk@cc.newcastle.edu.au or Martine Kalma, Ph: 49426217, fax: 49426258.

Wanting to House sit
US academic looking to house-sit. Seeking pleasant accommodation mid-Dec to early Feb.
Contact x6709

For Sale
Apollo 16" Girl’s Bike complete with removable training wheels - $50
Please telephone 49651573.
Hiking Boots. Scarpa Trek, Ladies Size 42 (9 1/2). Never Worn. Were $249 new, $150 ono.
Contact: Sue Work 49246374, Home 49585998.

Rural retreat
Western Red Cedar Cabin on a picturesque 5 acres at Wollombi. 75 minutes from Callaghan, 60 from Ourimbah. Ready to occupy as a weekender or the first stage of your retirement plan. Quality inclusions in a bushland/sandstone/spring-fed creek setting. Abundant wildlife. $149,000. Phone Ext5947 or 49983224.


Hunter/Chancellery Staff Association
Tea lady, Margaret Owens, said that recent fundraising events held by the Staff Association had been successful. The following amounts were raised between all members of staff for their generous support.

Semester dates for 1999
Semester 1 commences - Monday 22 February 1999
Semester 1 recess - Friday 2 April to Friday 9 April 1999 inclusive
Semester 1 concludes - Friday 4 June 1999
Mid Year Examinations - Monday 8 June to Friday 25 June 1999 inclusive

Semester 2 commences - Monday 12 July 1999
Semester 2 recess - Monday 20 September to Friday 1 October 1999 inclusive
Semester 2 concludes - Friday 29 October
End of Year Examinations - Monday 1 November to Friday 19 November 1999

Semester dates for 2000
Semester 1 commences - Monday 21 February 2000
Semester 1 recess - Friday 21 April to Friday 28 April 2000
Semester 1 concludes - Friday 2 June 2000
Mid Year Examinations - Wednesday, 7 June to Friday 23 June 2000

Semester 2 commences - Monday 10 July 2000
Semester 2 recess - Monday 11 September to Friday 6 October 2000
Semester 2 concludes - Friday 10 November 2000
End of Year Examinations - Wednesday 15 November to Friday 1 December 2000
The value of news

by Michael Coughlan*

With increased competition between institutions and dwindling public funding, the need for universities to create a positive public image has grown. Newcastle’s response has seen the evolution of Marketing and Media Services (M&MS) from the Information and Public Relations Unit. It has also resulted in an increase in the value of media coverage obtained by the University, from around $700,000 per year in 1994 to more than $1.4 million.

With a total of more than 2,000 media mentions this year, the public awareness of the University and what it represents has grown significantly. Many people and groups throughout the University have contributed to the changes, undoubtedly spurred on by a desire to help their field or discipline grow during difficult times.

The media section of M&MS (currently Karla McCormack, David Herbert and Charnelle Mondy) has focused on supporting the needs of staff. We have focused on stories relating to student recruitment or research funding and applied our efforts to making them relate to our target market. To do this, we’ve obtained outside involvement on issues, related stories to the sorts of motivational factors that influence students to enrol, focused on research outcomes for the community, linked stories to current topical issues and added human interest perspectives to stories.

Our approach has influenced the way some stories have been portrayed. For example, the highly successful Sydney launch of the retraining deal between BHP, the Faculty of Education and the Department of School Education. The national coverage of the story portrayed the University and the Faculty as groups that can deal with government and business and find solutions that make things better for people. This result came from a lot of effort, put in by Sandra Sirasch from Education and Karla McCormack from M&MS.

One of the secrets of success is catering to the target audience. If you have an interesting story to encourage nurses to enrol in a correspondence skills upgrade course, for instance, you’ll have more success if you get it on country radio than in the education section of a metropolitan newspaper. Of course it’s the story that creates media results. In an effort to enhance the pick up of University stories, we make regular contact with academic staff and section heads, cycling through all staff every four months or so. We yield about 25 percent return rate of stories which has contributed to an improved standard in the stories we are able to present to the media.

A media section survey conducted this year shows that the University community is more than satisfied with our service. Our overall satisfaction rating increased (95.5 percent) on the 1996/7 figure (94.5 percent), while the proportion of respondents who gave us the highest satisfaction rating increased by 12 percent. We have implemented suggestions made on the survey, including one that we provide more feedback on the results of media activity.

As our next priority, the media section will use national enrolment data, and information on media outlets and reading/listening patterns, to improve the way we target media in support of student recruitment campaigns. This will be especially relevant to the growing number of postgraduate correspondence courses the University is offering nationally.

* Michael Coughlan is Deputy Director of Marketing and Media Services

State Records Act 1998

In July 1998 the NSW Parliament passed the State Records Act. The significance of this Act is that for the first time the records of the universities in NSW are encompassed in the legislation. This new Act replaces the Archives Act 1960.

Under the Act the University is required to make and keep full and accurate records of its activities, and to establish and maintain a records management program in conformity with standards and codes of best practice. The University is therefore charged with the responsibility of ensuring the safe custody and proper preservation of its records.

The University now has many obligations to fulfil and to conform to the Act, and it is important for staff to be aware of the Act and what it means to them.

What is a record?

A record is recorded information, in any form, including data in computer systems, created or received and maintained by an organisation or person in the transaction of business or the conduct of affairs and kept as evidence of activity. All University records will now become State records.

It is important to note that:
- messages may be classed as records (ie email and voicemail messages) - guidelines in relation to this are presently being formulated;
- staff are not permitted to destroy/dispose of any records (including archives) without the permission of the State Records Authority. Do not throw out any records/files without consulting the University’s Records Management Office (formerly Central Registry).

Further information about the Act and its implications for staff will be available shortly. Please contact staff of the Records Management Office for more information.

Contacts
- Jenny Williams Ext 5205
- Carmel Northwood Ext 5455
- Hamish Lithgow Ext 5206
- Robin Sutcliffe/ Frances Munt Ext 5246
- email: central.registry@newcastle.edu.au

Management Office (formerly Central Registry).
The story of ill-fated lovers, Abelard and Heloise, has inspired writers and artists since the 12th century. But Paul Kavanagh from the Department of English was faced with a unique challenge when he was asked to write a libretto based on the complex tale of the marriage between Abelard, the famous philosopher, and his young student, Heloise.

Newcastle solicitor and composer, Ross Fiddes, approached three other writers to work on the words to accompany the music he began formulating when he first read the letters of Abelard and Heloise ten years ago. When Paul, a poet and author, who had previously written the libretto for a children's opera, The Young King, decided to accept the task, he sought inspiration in his record collection.

"Once I had read the letters and got an idea of what they were really thinking, as opposed to what they were saying, I would listen to opera records to find an aria that fitted the psychological and dramatic mood and write words to go with it," Paul said. "Maria Callas singing Verdi gave me the passion and emotion that I needed."

It was not Maria Callas but Linda Barcan who brought his words to life on stage in the initial performances of Abelard and Heloise at the Conservatorium Concert Hall last year and again in a performance at the Civic Theatre last month. Barcan, and other cast members including Derek Dowding, Michael Saunders and Jennifer Barnes join a 30 strong chorus to tell the tale of forbidden love, marriage, fidelity, castration, laughter and despair.

Fiddes and Kavanagh both won CONDA Awards for their contribution to theatre in Newcastle last year for Abelard and Heloise. Renamed Betrayed for the production staged at the Civic Theatre on August 1, the show was directed by Matthew Lazarus-Hall. Ricki Valla led a live orchestral ensemble. Most of the players were from the Conservatorium of Music, either students or teachers, including Tim Constable on percussion.

Fiddes' music is influenced by an eclectic mix of styles including medieval and renaissance through to jazz and even some rock.

"This recent performance is the second step toward full production," Paul said. "We'd like to have the world premiere of the show in Newcastle because it comes from here and the people in the cast created it with us."

A video of last month's production will be used to promote the musical to sponsors and theatrical entrepreneurs.