AND THE WINNER IS.......  

Thank you to everyone who entered the Xmas VGE limerick competition.  
What a response! Now I know how the staff in Jacques Chirac’s mailroom must have felt - well, we had a few anyway. The judge for the competition was Professor David Frost (Mrs Cheong excused herself on the grounds that a number of the limericks were about her and this may have caused her impartiality to be questioned!)

No competition would be complete without the judge’s official response and advice to the participants. Ours is no exception. This is what he had to say.

_The essence of lim’rick precision,_
_Is the metre, the rhyme and the rhythm;_
_Di-diddle-de-dum_
_Is the tune you must hum,_
_While your last line should make an incision._

Being a good Professor ever mindful of the need to attract outside funding for his Department, he concluded thus:

_The rules for a limerick norm_
_Can’t be caught in this very tight form;_
_But for moderate fees_
_- Plain cash, or nice teas-_
_My colleagues are pleased to perform._

But enough of the preamble - (drum roll and fanfare) - the winner is... Neil Wright, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Education, whose winning entry (he submitted five) was:

_A bottle of wine as a way_
_To halt staff grad attendance decay_
_Caused media mirth_
_- But whatever it’s worth,_
_Next time, make mine Cabernet!_

And just as he hoped, Neil has won a bottle of the University’s 30th Anniversary Cabernet Merlot (signed by Mrs Cheong) as well as the fabulous meat tray.

So moved was he by the honour of winning such an important competition that Neil composed an acceptance limerick which he recited at the presentation.

_This meat and wine prize, you’d agree_
_Is a prestigious fillip for me_
_Institutionally awarded_
_By my colleagues applauded._
_Looks great in the old C.V._
THE DEATH OF THE PUBLIC INTEREST: COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITY IN THE AGE OF PRIVATISATION

At the end of the last session of parliament in Canberra, a wide-ranging piece of legislation passed through the Senate on the combined vote of the Government and the Coalition parties.

The legislation which prompted yet another occasion of glorious agreement between the Government and the Opposition was the Competition Policy Reform Bill - the culmination of months of negotiation (some would call it bribery and arm-twisting) between the Commonwealth and State governments on competition policy.

It is a piece of legislation which calls into question our understanding of what it is we expect governments to do. It is a piece of legislation which, in the Democrats' view, undermines the concepts of community responsibility and the public interest.

It is - in short - a piece of legislation which sets in train one of the most radical and far-reaching reforms this country has ever seen - and yet it slipped quietly through the parliament with very little public debate about its contents or its consequences.

We could be witnessing the most profound challenge to Australian egalitarianism yet most Australians are unaware that it is even under threat. This seems to be the way of modern government: introduce wide-ranging change with lots of technical, jargonistic comment and wait several years for the public to catch up by feeling the impact. GATT and deregulation of financial institutions are two contemporary examples.

As we have seen time and time again in this country in recent years, there has been a kind of tacit agreement between the key players that the libertarian agenda of the government - appearing in this legislation in the form of competition reform and privatisation - was so obviously a wonderful thing, so clearly designed to generate massive benefits for all of us, that anyone who suggested otherwise was some sort of economic spoil-sport whose arguments were only designed to ruin everyone else's party.

As we ploughed on through the debate in the Senate, two things struck me (and not for the first time). For a start I found myself lamenting - yet again - just how difficult it is for alternative viewpoints to the current economic agenda to get a hearing in this country.

As John Quiggan (Professor of Economics at James Cook University and a strong critic of the Federal Government's economic agenda) recently observed: despite the very clear failure of deregulationist micro-economic reform to deliver the goods in Australia, “the alternatives to [these theories] are not merely rejected - they are completely excluded from the policy debate.”

Many other Australians - academics, political commentators, business people, consumer representatives - have raised doubts about the single-mindedness of an economic policy which apparently takes its own dogmas and platitudes so seriously and so literally.

But time and time again in public debates on these
issues, politicians and commentators stand up and say things like “competition can only be a good thing” or “competition will deliver benefits to Australian consumers” or “private corporations are more efficient than public ones” - as though these were God-given truths which cannot be challenged.

Well, of course, they are not God-given truths. They did not come down with Moses off the mountain - if only in the interests of promoting better and more widespread debate - we should be able to hear more from those who do challenge those statements.

The fact that we don’t hear from them is a sorry indictment of the narrowing of choice with both Australian politics and the Australian media. (But that is a topic for another speech!)

The second thing which struck me as we debated the Competition Policy Reform Bill in the Senate was that scarcely anyone talked about the public interest in the role of government or the notion of community responsibility. And I find the absence of those notions from public debate on economic policy to be disturbing and ultimately dangerous.

Brian Toohey summed up “rational economic man” like this: “So long as he doesn’t get caught, rational economic man has no regard for laws, and still less for social conventions, moral principles or the feelings of others. There is no natural urge towards cooperative endeavour, no sense of community, no tribal loyalty. Given half a chance, he would steal coins from a blind beggar.”

Peter Wiles - a British economist - is even more succinct. He says: “There are very few such people and we have a word for them: psychopaths.”

Psychopaths or not, the view from the economic rationalist window is a limited one - one from which only the individual can be seen. It is a view in which there is no sign of the wider community and no need for social or community interests to be upheld or protected by governments. It is a world in which governments only exist to deregulate, to privatise and to smooth the path for greater competition.

Don’t get me wrong: I am not opposed to greater competition in some areas or improved efficiency in the delivery of services. I am not opposed to privatisation where it delivers real economic benefits. I simply say that neither competition nor privatisation are acceptable goals in themselves. Both are simply a means to an end.

In my view, it is a fundamentally flawed approach to decide that competition or privatisation are “good things” and then mould social and economic policies around those goals. Surely we should first decide what sort of social and economic benefits we want to deliver to Australians and then explore whether or not competition or privatisation will deliver those benefits. With that in mind, it becomes fairly obvious - for example - that competition might very well be a good thing when we are selling apples and oranges, but it is not necessarily a good thing when it comes to delivering health services, or aged care services or providing decent housing for low income families.

The sad fact is that the Government simply refuses to learn the lessons from other countries. A number of recent analyses of utility sell-offs in the UK suggest that utility sell-offs have made millionaires of those who run the former state enterprises while costing consumers a lot of money. As Peter Ellingsen observed in The Age: “Britain’s 20 million consumers have seen $200 million of their money handed to the new privateers on a plate.”

Even the now retired Lord Parkinson - the architect of many of the privatisations - was forced to grudgingly concede earlier this year that “the net result [of privatisation] was that shareholders have done rather better out of it, and customers have done rather less well.”

That is a bit of an understatement. If we just take the privatisation of water in the UK, for example, the statistics show that consumers are doing a whole lot worse than Lord Parkinson likes to make out. Charges are up 67%, profits are up 125% and surprise, surprise - chief executives have been awarded pay rises of 130%. Meanwhile, investment levels have failed to keep up with previously agreed schedules and disconnections due to customers’ inability to pay their bills are up 50%.

It’s hard to see that outcome as being anything more than a big gain for the few at the expense of the many.

Back in Australia, the results to date are not all that different. For example, Ken Davidson of The Age has described the deregulation of Australian banking in these terms: Yes, he said, it had delivered competition - “competition for the top 20% of customers, competition
to gouge more transaction fees out of the 60% in the middle and competition to get rid of the bottom 20% of bank customers."

The excluding - or down grading - of the concept of the public benefit is a trend which I think threatens to undermine some very key features of Australian society. It threatens those features which we like to think go towards making us a relatively fair country.

I don't think it's an exaggeration to say that one of the strongest features of Margaret Thatcher's legacy to Britain has been a cultural shift away from a society which is concerned with notions like fairness and community responsibility towards one which has embraced self-interest and greed as important - if not its most important - motivations.

Call me old-fashioned (although I prefer to think of it as being far-sighted) but I don't want this country to become one where the predominant message is that it's OK to compete against anyone for anything - and it doesn't matter all that much who gets hurt in the process.

Another area of accountability which concerns me is the question: just who are we selling our services to? If you sit down and look at the detail, you might be surprised - and alarmed - by the high number of foreign-owned multinational companies which are in the market for contracts. Thus, we now have IBM operating the Victorian Government's transport technology. We have the American owned EDS company winning a nine year computer management contract with the South Australian Government. We have two French and two British companies bidding to run South Australia's water and sewerage systems. We have a British company running a private prison in Mount Gambier. And so on.

I am not necessarily saying these contracts should not have been awarded - I am not opposed to foreign ownership if it brings with it some economic benefits for Australia. But I think there are grounds for concern when we are not just selling our public assets and services, but we are selling them to foreign-owned corporations who are using them primarily to generate profits for foreigners.

The third - and final - concept I want to talk about is the idea that we should place social and environmental considerations at least on an equal footing with economic ones because social cohesion and environmental sustainability may turn out to be the most important building blocks of economic success.

In other words, community responsibility has a value which extends well beyond the individual and which has a real - and measurable - economic benefit. Throughout the world, we are starting to hear from economists who are arguing that social justice and a more cohesive community can be the causes - some would even say the essential ingredients - in making a nation more competitive and even richer.

And most of us look to governments to act - on our behalf - in the wider public interest. Most of us look to governments to stand for something more than simply turning red ink into black. Unfortunately, most of our leaders don't see it that way.

Governments are not businesses. They are not corporations. They are not some sort of board or group of chief executives responsible for running Victoria Inc. - or Australia Inc., they are governments. They represent all of us - and they are the practical embodiment of the public interest. Their overriding responsibility is service to all Australians. If they don't want to take on that sort of responsibility, we might as well just install Kerry Packer and a few of his mates in Parliament House and kiss democracy goodbye.

The sad fact is that because our governments are behaving more like corporations and less like governments, the notion of the public interest is just about dead in the water. It's probably still breathing - but only just.

We are facing an election in which the Government is planning to run a campaign based on the argument that the Coalition will sell Telstra and Australia Post if it gets into power. In other words, a Government which is responsible for the sale of at least $8.5 billion worth of public assets in the last eight years is going to go to the Australian people with the basic slogan: "don't vote for them, they're worse than we are." That not only says something about the sorry state of Australian politics - it also says something about how low our expectations of governments have sunk.

I think it also says that it is time to take issue with the prevailing economic agenda. It is time to reclaim the role of government and to restore those notions of community responsibility and the public interest to their rightful place - back on the political and economic centre-stage.
Staff working in spartan conditions who have found themselves guilty of coveting the opulence of the Chancellery, may wish to reassess their position in light of a recent memo addressed to its occupants. The memo runs to two pages but just a few highlights should give something of its flavour.

"Attachment of Various Items to Fabric Workstations"

The cloth in workstations is not intended to act as a pinboard or noticeboard. Many members of staff in open areas of the Chancellery were provided with pinboards specifically for that purpose. However, some workstations have been covered by personal photographs, posters, signs and so on, which leads to a cluttered and untidy appearance of work areas generally. No materials are to be adhered to workstations.

Visual Clutter

Many items become cluttered with stored items (some seldom if ever used), personal items and on occasions with items for sale such as confectionary. Workstations are not appropriate display areas for such materials and should not be used for these purposes.

Christmas Decorations

Christmas decorations are acceptable but these should be installed with care so as not to damage paintwork or fittings with tape etc. and should be removed promptly after the festive season.

‘Feral’ Furniture

Staff are encouraged to return furniture to its proper place if relocated temporarily for meetings or other purposes. Some areas inherit furniture of an inconsistent type, colour etc.

Pot Plants

A number of plants of poor quality have been introduced into the building such as fish bone ferns in poor condition and other unattractive plants. Pots and containers should be integrated to match one another and the décor, and plants properly cared for if they are to enhance the appearance of such areas.

The burden of working in the nerve centre is indeed a heavy one.
I was a wog when the term still meant something. I grew up in a region of Sydney known then as “little Italy”.

It was the closest thing in those days that Australia had to a ghetto; we had our own shops, our own churches, our own languages.

The official term was - “bloody new Australians”, the forerunner to today’s more politically correct - NESB, non English-speaking background. The Italian and Greek kids were specifically differentiated. “Wogs” specifically referred to the Greek kids; they had olive skin but were more likely to have curly, black hair. Italians, who also were olive-skinned but who were more likely to be slick-haired were specifically referred to as “spicks”. We others, who were neither wogs nor spicks, made up the residue of bloody new Australians.

Yet that term galvanised all of us proto-wogs into an implicit union - we weren’t the real Australians.

What prevailed in our community was natural, true multiculturalism and determination.

The multiculturalism was expressed by our mothers. The Ukrainian mothers had no problem communicating with the Greek mothers and the Italian mothers. After all they had suffered a similar past, they lived a common present and shared a common hope for the future. They were all bloody new Australians; they were in the same boat; and probably came out to Australia literally in the same boat. English was their common language and through it they could communicate with one another; it was also a handy language with which to communicate with the mono-lingual locals.

Our parents started in the camps in Bathurst, much like the migrant camps here in Greta. The camps weren’t much but they were a distinct step up from the labour camps and concentration camps of war-torn Europe. These people were used to camps and it was in them that they learned multiculturalism. Your get used to sharing with Latvians,
Lithuanians, Poles, Russians, Ukrainians, Estonians, Serbs and Croats; you invent a common language; you learn German in order to speak to the guards; you learn English to communicate with your American liberators. While perhaps still harbouring innate racist prejudices and stereotypes, you nonetheless become tolerant of fellow human beings suffering the same oppressive fate.

The determination was multi-fold. There was a determination never again to be hungry; hence, the celebration of food once it was aplenty. There was determination to make a good life in the new-found country; hence they worked hard and encouraged their children. There was a determination to preserve their culture. But there was a recognition of a responsibility to assimilate into their new society.

The culture was preserved by independent means. The Greek kids went to Greek school. The Jewish kids went to Hebrew classes. These were held after hours - 4pm to 6pm - or on Saturdays or after church. We didn’t ask for school time; that’s when we were being Australian. And although it might have been difficult for the grandmothers, everyone else learned English. The kids learned it at school. We didn’t get, and we didn’t want, instruction in our native tongues. English gave us all an equal footing. If we wanted our native tongue we studied it discretely and separately, at home or at Greek school. Preservation of the native culture was a personal domestic imperative, not something that the Government did for you. After all, it was none of their business, and what would they know about it anyway; they didn’t even eat garlic.

My parents weren’t clever or intellectual. I didn’t come from a line of doctors. My mother was a peasant and made sandwiches for a living. My father could have been a tradesman. Perhaps it’s hard to go to tech when you work day shift and night shift in a factory in order to save money and pay cash for your first house.

Nevertheless there was a domestic ethic: “Donn be lyk you fudda; donn wear overalls wot you wife have to boil in de copper, donn cum home wit griss udu you fingermails. You go to Universitet and be sumthink.”

What disturbs me, and indeed what I find affronting, is the contemporary push for political correctness and bureaucratic social engineering. The University has to have a charter for cultural diversity. The University has to have a set of guidelines to prove how nice it is to wogs.

First, this is another bloody document that floats across our desks; another issue for which we have to have a committee and a Faculty Board meeting in order to ratify a communal response.

On the other hand the mistake may be one of talent. Are we supposed to be concerned about individuals who don’t have the skills or determination to succeed but hide their inadequacies under the camouflage of language difficulties? Individuals able and willing to undertake a university course will do so without reliance on special help to overcome their culturalism. I took my lectures translating about how different races react to pain. I will continue simply to teach good medicine: irrespective of race and culture, all patients are to be treated with the same dignity and respect.

Second, what’s wrong with contemporary bloody new Australians? Are they a pack of pussies? Back then, no one had to provide bridging classes in language so that we could go to university or survive school. We didn’t expect the history and social studies curricula to be changed in order to reflect our place in the world order. We could tell that we were learning the history of British aristocracy. If you wanted the truth about European history you asked Dad, or listened to the oral history of the dinner table and family parties.

Third, I and my generation survived assimilation without pandering, and frankly I guess I am jealous that current new Australians are regarded as more deserving of special treatment. We did it without help, so why can’t they? I put it down to mistaken liberalism and bleeding hearts.

Does the Anglo-Saxon community feel some sort of guilt; that now they feel some sort of duty of care for new immigrants? Well, we don’t need the fuss. Just spell out the rules, and we can do it our way on your terms. I can write a thesis in English. I don’t want dispensation to write it in Ukrainian. Nor as an academic do I want in the future to be obliged to have to accept a thesis in Mandarin; although ironically, I know that my Chinese colleagues are so well-versed in English as to never need that provision.

Neither shall I change my teaching in order to reflect and pay lip-service to multiculturalism. I will not dignify the concept of “Mediterranean back pain” even by formally refuting it. Rather, I will continue to treat wogs in order to show that they, like other human beings, lose their pain once they are diagnosed and treated properly. Nor will I add to my teaching load by speculating about how different races react to pain. I will continue simply to teach good medicine: irrespective of race and culture, all patients are to be treated with the same dignity and respect.
us wogs have more in common and more in sympathy with these un-Australians than our politically correct masters. Unfortunately for the charter, Aborigines are not NESB; nor are they bloody new Australians; they are confounded old Australians.

So, what are you going to do? You can't use "NESB", for that disenfranchises and disaffects the blackfella. Shall we have a compound term - "NESB plus Aborigines plus Torres Strait Islanders plus anyone else we accidentally forgot about" i.e. NESBATSABWAF?

Fifth and final, why are we having a charter? It's because someone said we better have one. But you can't eradicate racism and stupidity by regulations. Such regulations are simply a symbol that says if we were a decent society this is what we would do. Offenders don't care about legislation.

It is a futile waste of time trying to debate exactly the clauses and the framing of a charter. The time required to get it perfectly right is not worth the putative benefit to be gained. Someone will always feel left out; or the end-product will be impotent in any case, and just designed to make well-wishers feel good.

There is, however, a pragmatic solution. One epigram replaces a constitutional style document.

"Just treat everyone with respect and humanity."

Or perhaps the University's charter might simply refer people to Matthew 22: verses 38 and 39?**

*Nik Boduk is Professor of Anatomy in the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences.

**Editor's note: "This is the first and great commandment: And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.'"

---

**WHAT WAS GOOD ENOUGH FOR MY FATHER...**

by Susan Jones, the University's Legal Liaison Officer and former EEO Coordinator who (on seeing a preview copy of the preceding piece) was moved to put chisel to stone.

---

**Scene:** The Paleolithic Era. A pleasant, airy cave, north-east facing, sea views, Gondwanaland.

In the distance, Urk can be seen, slowly dragging a macropod by its tail.

"Look dear, I really got lucky today. Roast macropod tail for dinner!"

Gwn smiled and patted his cheek. "That's wonderful, darling. You are clever. And then to do all that hard work getting it here..."

Urk had a dim suspicion that this meant something. Hunting and hauling was always hard work. Everything was hard work in the Paleolithic Era. But he was tired, so he ignored the comment and concentrated on manoeuvering the dead beast into position near the fire.

It was not until he stubbed his toe against a loose rock that Urk noticed.

"What's all this rubbish, Gwn? Can't you keep the cave neat for once? I don't know what you do all day..." A frown furrowed his brow, though it was already so low and furrowed that only a wife could tell.

"Urk, I've been thinking." Gwn picked up a roundish, flattish stone with a hole more-or-less in the middle, through which she had inserted a straightish stick. She rolled it around Urk's foot. "Look, if we make a hole in this other stone and put the other end of the stick in it, it will move over the ground. And then we can fix this flat bit of rock on top of the stick - I haven't worked that bit out yet - and you can use it to pull your kills home."

She grinned with the thrill of the idea.

Urk's frown deepened as he tried to grapple with the concept. Then he kicked the stick away; it rolled unevenly a short distance and stopped.

"Load of rubbish!" he grunted. "Even if it worked - and it wouldn't - I'd be a laughing stock. The blokes would wet themselves. I'd never hear the end of it. Anyway, it was good enough for the elders to haul beasts, it's good enough for me. Now get this thing skinned. I'm hungry."

Urk stumped crossly into the cave. Gwn sighed and reached for a knife.
Scene: A maternity ward in 19th Century Vienna. An extremely pale, writhing pregnant woman is in the bed nearest the door. Two nurses, shrouded in floor-length grey dresses and white, blood-spattered aprons, are standing by the bed, waiting.

Dr Sacher strides importantly into the room, stripping off his elegant kid gloves. This being morning, he is wearing his morning suit. A nurse silently and respectfully offers a tray to receive the gloves and the hat. The other nurse helps Dr Sacher silently and respectfully into his accouchement apron.

"Are we ready? Where's that Semmelweis?" As he spoke, young Dr Semmelweis came in, carrying a bowl.

"I was just washing my hands, sir. I've been thinking..."

Dr Sacher glowered. "Thinking? A dangerous exercise. You're here to observe, listen and learn. Wash your hands if you must, but why bring that" - he flicked a disdainful finger against the bowl - "into my ward? What the devil is it, anyway?"

Dr Semmelweis quailed a little beneath the ferocious glare of his esteemed superior, but stood his ground.

"Ridiculous!" snorted Dr Sacher. "My hands are perfectly clean already. Or are you suggesting I'm dirty? That all the eminent men who have gone before you were dirty?" The nurses behind him mirrored his distaste for this offensive implication.

Dr Semmelweis sighed inaudibly and handed his bowl to a stony-faced nurse. He murmured something Dr Sacher chose to interpret as an apology and moved to the bedside to assist his mentor.

Scene: An untidy office in the Medical Sciences Building at the University of Newcastle.
Professor Nik Bogduk is hunched over his computer, modelling pathways in the central nervous system.

After a tap at the half-open door, Jaimie Lim, a young postdoc, comes in, a sheet of computer printout in her hand. There is an air of suppressed excitement about her.

"Nik, sorry to interrupt, but can you have a look at this? I've been thinking..."

Nik goodhumouredly swings around from his desk to look at Jaimie's paper. He listens as Jaimie works her way through the little presentation.

"...and it could even add something really significant to our understanding of back pain, don't you think? Real progress!"

Nik restrains himself from giving Jaimie an indulgent pat on the cheek. Instead, he smiles gently.

"I think we know enough about back pain, Jaimie. All we need to do now is to refine the application of that knowledge. Anyway, 'progress' can be a pretty overrated concept, you know. There's a lot to be said for just letting things evolve in their own good time."

The light in Jaimie's eyes dies out and she sighs a little. But after all, she reflects, Nik is so much older and wiser than she. He must be right.

It's quite likely that versions of the first scenario occurred over and over again until the wheel caught on. And we know that something like the second scenario must have happened a lot until Semmelweis' revolutionary idea of antisepsis was accepted and adopted, much less fully understood.

But the third one? Nik Bogduk telling a younger colleague that we didn't need to know anything more about back pain? Rejecting a new possibility? No way! and yet isn't he saying something very like that in his article? If the old way was good enough for me, it should be good enough for you.

Really, I think the key to Nik's view of our charter for multicultural diversity lies in his honest admission that he's a bit "jealous that current new Australians are regarded as more deserving of special treatment. We did it without help, so why can't they?" I can't imagine him telling a young sufferer of back pain that his father, with the same problem, managed the condition without any special treatment or help, so why should the son expect any? I know that back injury is one thing and the condition of being from another culture is another, but isn't the underlying principle the same? We grow, find better ways of doing things, learn from experiences and mistakes and, perhaps, make life a little easier for some people in some ways. It doesn't mean we respect less those who did so well without that particular kind of help; it doesn't imply a judgment that we find the current generation of 'new Australians' more deserving of bridging classes or acknowledgment of their own culture than the 'old new Australians'. It just means that we're recognising some of our past insensitivities and have learnt from them.

Resenting the 'feather-bedding' of the younger generation (of any group) is a very human thing to feel; older, pre-Affirmative Action career women have been known to voice such sentiments from time to time. But let's not give those feelings more than their due. Life would be much more rude, brutish and short without the wheel (and antisepsis and Professors of Anatomy)!
SEAHORSES - FROGS OF THE SEA?

By John Paxton*  

Seahorses, those curious members of the pipefish family with a head like a horse and a body encased in bony plates, have been known since ancient times. Late Greek and Roman writers, such as Pliny (AD 23-79), attributed medicinal powers (cures for fever, retention of urine, baldness, leprosy) to the common Mediterranean seahorse.

The first (generic) scientific name of all the true seahorses is *Hippocampus*, from the Greek *hippos* (horse). The derivation of the second half of the name is debatable, with some opting for the Greek *kampe* (caterpillar) in reference to the shape of the body and tail, and Whitley and Allan (1958) indicating an unnamed Greek word for monster. Equally plausible are either the Greek *kampos* (a sea animal) or *kampe*, a form of *kamptos* (bend) in reference to the right angle bend the head makes with the body of seahorses.

This bent head is the single definitive feature of seahorses, as all other members of the pipefish and seahorse family Syngnathidae have the head in line with the body, or slightly bent. Seahorses also have a finless, prehensile tail that is used to grasp underwater vegetation for support. The intermediates between pipefishes and seahorses, the pipehorses and seadragons, also have a finless tail, but not a bent head. All other members of the family have a tail fin that is large, small, or rarely degenerate.

The second (specific) scientific name is unique for each species, so that each species in a genus has a distinct name. The pipefish and seahorse family is a large one, with more than 250 species. The 230 pipefishes are relatively well known taxonomically, due primarily to the work of the late American ichthyologist C.E. Dawson (1985). However, the seahorses still require taxonomic revision, and the current estimate of 25-30 species may change. Seahorses are notoriously variable in their coloration, number and length of spines, and even their body proportions that can change as they grow.

Australia has a rich pipefish and seahorse fauna, with more than 100 species easily placing it in the top ten of Australia’s largest fish families (we have more than 4000 fish species in some 300 families). Our ten species of seahorses range in size from the 25-30cm bigbelly seahorse (*Hippocampus abdominalis*) common in the outer estuaries and open coasts from Sydney Harbour to South Australia and also in New Zealand, to the tiny 5cm bullneck seahorse, soon to be described as new, from offshore waters of southeast Australia. Clearly, these piscine “horses” are not in the same size league with either their terrestrial namesakes, nor the mythical sea serpents. Whites seahorse (*H. whitei*) and the shorthead seahorse (*H. breviceps*) are also found in temperate Australian waters, while our other six species are all tropical.

The striking size and shape of seahorses are matched by their colours, swimming and feeding habits. The most beautifully coloured Australian species is the zebra seahorse (*H. zebra*) known from only two Queensland specimens and as striking in its brown and white livery as its name indicates. Contrasting stripes are known to break up the body outline and thus afford protection from predators, and a second tropical Australian seahorse,
developing eggs on rocks or nests in such groups as cichlids all have species that brood developing eggs in different fish families. Cardinalfishes, catfishes, and others depending on the species, lasts from three to seven weeks. The developing young are nourished both by the yolk in the eggs and the numerous capillaries in the placenta-like lining of the pouch of the father. Male pregnancy, similar to the eyes of a chameleon; "I look ahead" is only part of their story.

The most extraordinary aspect of seahorse biology is their reproduction. Unlike most of the rest of the fish world, it is the seahorse male that nurtures the developing eggs in a protective pouch lined with placenta-like tissue, to finally give birth through a series of violent contractions to a brood of miniature seahorses. Eggs are passed from the female, via a small tube, to the pouch of the male, and in the process are fertilised by his sperm. Usually 100 to 300 eggs are passed in a courtship and mating that may last up to seven hours. And here ends the active participation of the female in parenthood.

The developing young are nourished both by the yolk in the eggs and the numerous capillaries in the placenta-like lining of the pouch of the father. Male pregnancy, depending on the species, lasts from three to seven weeks. Then the 1-2cm long young are ejected from the pouch, together with undeveloped eggs and some tissue, by a series of contractions that can take up to 24 hours.

Males are involved actively in parenting in a number of different fish families. Cardinalfishes, catfishes, and cichlids all have species that brood developing eggs in the parents' mouth, males in some species and females in others. Males also are known to guard and tend developing eggs on rocks or nests in such groups as damselfishes. And males of all species of the pipefish family Syngathidae carry the developing eggs in tissue on either the belly or tail. However, it is the male seahorse that is especially noteworthy, due to the combination of a greatly enlarged pouch (that is over the tail rather than the belly) and the birthing contractions that are so similar to a female pregnancy and birth.

Our knowledge of seahorse biology has developed over decades, and even centuries, with detailed observations on Mediterranean seahorses published in the 1800s. Our most recent information is based on studies by Oxford University researcher Amanda Vincent who spent part of a year at the University of Sydney that included six months of diving in Sydney Harbour. The object of her study was a colony of Whites seahorses. Daily diving (beginning at dawn) showed a remarkable social behaviour that involved monogamous pairs, at least over the October - April breeding season and possibly for life. Each day began with males and females reinforcing their pair bond with a greeting dance that lasted six to ten minutes. This greeting ritual expanded to courtship and mating within a day of the male giving birth.

Dr Vincent found 100 seahorses living in the several hundred square metres of her seagrass meadow study area in Sydney Harbour, and estimated that each pair averages 1000 young over the entire breeding season. She assumed a huge juvenile mortality, as there was no seahorse population explosion over the months of her study. With limited reproductive potential (relative to such fishes as barramundi or north Atlantic cod that can reproduce more than a million eggs a season) seahorses and pipefishes may be excellent indicator species for the health of an estuarine or inshore marine environment, much as frogs are for forests. Seahorses are relatively easy to observe, and programs to monitor population numbers would not be difficult. When a particular estuary is considered threatened by some form of habitat change, changes in population sizes of animals like seahorses could be valuable proof that conservation measures are needed.

*Principal Research Scientist (Fishes) The Australian Museum, Sydney*
WANTED: WORLD'S BEST SUBJECTS

The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Technology Sydney, Professor Gus Guthrie was invited to give the Occasional Address at the Graduation Ceremony held on the 13th October. The following is an edited version of that address.

My normal role at UTS graduation ceremonies is to sit quietly on the stage - it is after all the Chancellor's ceremony - and amongst other things to listen to the Occasional Address. When drafting notes for this speech I calculated that I had listened to nearly 120 such addresses in the past nine and a half years. Unfortunately they are all categorised by one common feature - I can remember little of what they were about - the exceptions are the few speakers that chose to incorporate some dramatic effect into their speech. One I shall always remember clearly. We were holding that particular ceremony at the Sydney Opera House and after being introduced the speaker went to the lectern and without any warning burst into song for about one minute, then said - "well that fulfils my ambition to sing at the Sydney Opera House" - and then gave us his address.

I do not propose to use any dramatic fireworks - what can I talk to you about in the hope that some of you will remember what it was about in a few hours time?

At UTS recently we have been having considerable community debate about the future of universities, and particularly of UTS. I notice that your Vice-Chancellor, Professor Mortley has also recently written a paper about the future of this University. I thought it might be interesting to share with you some of my thoughts and reflections on how universities have changed and what they might be like in 15-20 years time. I will not be able to do any more than touch on some important issues. Trying to be a futurist is a dangerous occupation when one thinks of the futures that have been predicted by others in the past. People's imagination rarely breaks through the conceptual restrictions of the present. The predictions that are made are often more a guide to the preoccupations and concerns at the time of the prediction, rather than the actual future. Looking back over predictions that have been made during the past 100 years suggests that technological developments are generally underestimated, whilst developments in social relations are usually wildly optimistic. For example, Helen Spence's "Year in the Future", written in 1888 and set in 1988, predicted among other things that knife cleaning machines would be invented to lighten the domestic load. Other writers predicted airships that would travel from Sydney to London in only 10 days. Spence predicted world peace and a six hour working day. Others were convinced that alcoholism and crime would be virtually eliminated. I remember being told many times 50 years ago that by the 1990s there would be full employment and everyone would only work for four days each week.

Let us turn to universities. When Harold MacMillan (later to become Prime Minister of the UK) went up to Balliol College, Oxford, in the
early years of this century, it is alleged that a tutor said to him -

"Nothing you learn in this University, dear boy, will do you the slightest good in the afterlife, except the ability to detect humbug when you see it."

That was probably the role and function of Oxford at that time. Oxford was showing its inheritance - that graduates should be civilised first and learned second. It is not a role I see for universities either now or in the future.

Universities are amongst the oldest continuing institutions - only religions have survived longer. Universities have always been changing and will always change. They are after all a force for change in society. They will change society and be changed by society - therein lies a most delicate balance.

Universities will always be subject to a wide range of pressures - business and industry; students; demography; governments of all sorts; social factors, such as the role of women; the professional bodies; and so on.

What has been taught in the universities has varied over the centuries, generally in response to the needs of society. In the early days it was theology for the Church, law for the State, and medicine for society generally. Nowadays, virtually any subject worthy of study in depth (and some others as well) form part of a university curriculum somewhere. Who would have forecast 20 years ago that tourism would be a degree subject in many Australian universities. This year one Australian university has begun offering a degree in Golf Management. What might Australian universities be teaching in 20 years time?

Today universities face a problem of their own making - they have become a necessity. A few score years ago universities were of little real consequence to the society to which they belonged; they were almost irrelevant. Today universities are integral to the economic well-being of a country. We now live in a knowledge-based society. Universities are a success because they provide the educated and trained people necessary to keep the modern technological society moving; they are now indispensable.

However, the public universities must realise that in the future they will no longer have a monopoly, if they ever truly did, of the transmission, advancement and preservation of knowledge. We are now at the beginnings of a knowledge-based society. Private universities and colleges will develop to share in this knowledge dissemination; businesses are developing their own educational and training institutions.

A few score years ago there were probably as many "clever people" inside as outside universities - today there are many, many more outside and this will have a tremendous impact on universities as we know them. Let me quote from Sir Douglas Hague writing in his excellent little book "Beyond Universities - a New Republic of the Intellect" in which he says -

"In the next two decades, people outside the universities will increasingly be working in similar ways and with similar talents to those within; and they will do so more innovatively and with greater vigour, because they will come to what they do unstressed by academic traditions, preconceptions and institutions. The pioneers of the knowledge society will increasingly be able to compete with the universities and increasingly, will do so. Since most [British] universities are in the public sector and most British businesses are in the private sector, this will be a battle in which the private sector will threaten some of the public sector's most entrenched monopolies.

To avoid being driven out of activities which they have imagined to be their own by right, the universities will have to make substantial changes in what they do and how they do it. Where they find that difficult, one solution will be to form alliances... Increasingly the choice will be alliance or annihilation.

The successful university of the 21st century cannot be an academic bunker!"

This is a major challenge to universities and I am not sure that most are ready to answer it.

As well as the pressures I have just highlighted, universities cannot be untouched by the major developments that are occurring in information technology, multimedia and so on. Indeed they are already beginning to be added to the armoury of teaching methodologies. We shall soon be at a point when almost any university subject could be available 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year via multimedia network technology. Why should large classes of students all be required to turn up at the same time and at the same place to be taught the same material, and perhaps even more important why should they all be taught at the same pace? Once this level of technology is reached on a large scale - it is with us now on a small scale - there will be a very competitive global market for such subjects. Since virtually any point on the globe will be accessible from any other point, why should most universities in the future bother to design and develop any subjects at all? After all, first class subjects will be able to be purchased - so why bother with the expense of locally produced ones done with less resources. Institutions could become "virtual universities" buying in all their subjects from other universities around the world.

The new global communication companies easily could become the global universities of the future - what impact would that have on traditional universities - that would be a real intrusion of the private sector. Recently, these global communication companies have signed up top class rugby league players for not that enormous sums of money. I wonder when Murdoch or one of the
other global networks will buy up the 10 or 20 best physicists in the world to design physics subjects, or the best group of historians to develop history subjects and so on. It really is not such a far fetched idea.

How should Australian universities respond? There is only one answer in my view, and that is as soon as possible they should form three or four consortia to pool resources and to develop some world's best subjects. If not, in ten years time we could be importing a major part of the degrees offered in our universities.

Let me explore another aspect of this future. If subjects become available for individual study at any time and at an individual student’s own pace, what will happen to that important ingredient of education - social contact and interaction - with both academic staff and with fellow students? Maybe this is really where universities will be differentiated. In the virtual university there will be no necessity to meet other students and tutors, except perhaps electronically - there may even be a virtual graduation ceremony via the Internet. Our view of the university of the future at UTS is that there will be a physical place called UTS, and that is where students will attend to meet their mentors - academics who will meet with them in small groups to challenge their understanding of what they have learned from their individual study. It is my view that it is the quality of this personal back-up which will distinguish universities in the future.

Another question that has to be raised about the possibility of having a range of world best subjects available to all is - in what language are these subjects going to be taught. English is now the accepted language - but it is still spoken by a minority of the world’s peoples. Will there be a new colonialism in that to be a part of this brave new university world you will have to speak English, or will these world class subjects be translated into many languages at a not inconsiderable cost. Maybe we need a new Esperanto. I recently met a professor from China who was working on a future world language - basically English words but with a Chinese approach to grammar and sentence construction - a clever concept.

Let me come back to you, the graduates whose success we are celebrating today. Is anything that I have been saying relevant to you? I have been talking about the future of universities and many of you have already left the university world. A few of you will come back as academics and hopefully change universities as they have always been changing. The majority of you have an important role as alumni of this University - to stay involved with the University, and to influence its development from outside.

Even in countries like the USA which have much better alumni systems than here in Australia, the value of alumni is under-rated. Recently in the Times Higher Education Supplement an un-named President of a university in the USA was quoted as saying:

“To know as much about our students on exit as we know about them on entry hardly seems an extraordinary expectation... how can we possibly give any meaningful leadership to program and service improvement without data on what our graduates know and think?”

This is one of the challenges of the late 1990s that universities must attend to - we cannot remain as ignorant as we are on this important topic.

I have seen universities change markedly in the 40 years since I first graduated. Universities will continue to change - you as graduates, as alumni of this University, can assist in helping to guide those changes. Universities must receive more help and feedback from their graduates who are the only people testing every day the relevance of their education.
WHAT’S IN A NAME?

by Leanne Richard* 

Have you ever wondered why the computer you’ve logged into is called “dinosaur” or “dorrit”? Those who have done the machine naming know this is a very important issue. Each computer name needs to be unique within a certain domain (the University is a domain), so that you won’t confuse one computer with another.

Choosing a name carefully is important. It shouldn’t be too personal, such as your own name or have an odd spelling, or be too long or contain non-alphanumeric characters.

Often, theme names are chosen which in turn reflect the site administrator’s personality. Who said computers were boring? The examples below show that computer professionals can be quite creative!

Doug Scott, formerly attached to the Faculty of Engineering and who now works for Computing Services, named a number of Sun Sparc stations after an interest of his: American cars. So among the Engineering Faculty computers there are those named “firebird” and “charger”. Engineering also has computers which follow the solar system theme. At Computing Services the naming scheme had an interesting limitation: VMS restricts the name to no more than six letters. Therefore, the names had to be six letters or less so using an Australian fauna theme there are computers called “bilby”, “possum”, “brolga”, “koala”, “jabiru” and “taipan”.

Recently, however, two new Alphas arrived at Computing Services. The Director suggested they be called B1 and B2 after the pyjama-wearing bananas on ABC Television. Unfortunately, the names were too much alike to be easily distinguished (just as B1 and B2 are identical in appearance), so it was back to the original naming scheme! The Alphas were christened “ibis” and “egret”.

The Networks Group at Computing Services have revealed their sense of humour by naming their computers after characters in “The Goon Show”. There’s the news server “seagoon” named after Harry Secombe’s main character, as well as the delightful “bluebottle”, “bloodnok” and “neddy”.

On a more practical (and not nearly so interesting) note, the computers in the CT building are generally named according to the room they are in and their position in that room. This makes it easier to keep track of the many PCs in the labs eg “ct311pc30 is the 30th PC in room CT311.

Over at Computer Science, the computers are in a range of colours: “sage”, “mocha”, “grape”, “amber”, “peach”, “slate” and “lily”. Cate Lence’s rationale was that this would provide her with a long list of short but interesting names to choose from. There’s also “bigfoot”, Simon’s computer, which is apt when you consider that he’s also known as the Barefoot Wonder around campus!

And “cc”? It’s an historic name going back to the days when the Department of Computing Services was known as the Computer Centre. It was also short for Computer Cluster. “Just say CC!”

* Computer Programmer Computing Services

While on my way home in the car
I pondered my proposed EVR
My spouse surely reckons
The lump sum that beckons
Won’t allow us to go very far

Neil Wright, Department of Education

17
As we end the year the way we began it by grumbling about lack of funds and lack of staff, it might be salutary to hear first hand of the problems facing education in the new South Africa. The letter comes from Robert Segall, formerly Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) at Griffith University and now on the staff of the International Institute for Educational Development, the Faculty of Education, University of Cape Town.

"The Nationalist Government’s policy is separate development. Now if a white man marries a black Transkeian woman, the man will be voting for the white parliament, the black for the Transkei parliament and the children for the Coloured persons’ Representative Council. I do not think this makes for a happy family life." Mr F W de Klerk explaining in a rather quaint fashion why the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act was necessary, July 1975.

Just a reminder that the Nobel prize winning Deputy President of South Africa was an integral part of the system whose consequences in education will last for another 30 years, bringing misery and poverty to another two generations of the majority of the country’s population. Indeed F W de Klerk was the Minister of Education responsible for the Extension of Universities Act which further restricted access of blacks to universities.

A South African friend of mine remarked once that I was too pessimistic to understand South Africa. Well, maybe he is right. Despite having lived here for nearly five years, I still find it surreal, albeit interesting and enjoyable. There are, of course, grounds for optimism - the miraculous peaceful transition, the saintly Nelson Mandela, and a number of very able cabinet ministers.

So why the pessimism or, as I obviously prefer to think, the realism? Having suffered so much, people believe that things will not only be better - which they certainly are - but that things must turn out to be good; they believe that unemployment will fall and that the will to uplift the poor will result in their upliftment. And then there are the Nationalists. These are the people who insisted that sanctions were not a serious matter. They now claim that their abolition will turn the economy around.

Let’s briefly look at the economics. The annual growth in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has been:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>GDP Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>-0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>-0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>-2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>+1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>+2.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and the prediction is +3% for 1995 and 1996. Note that these are actual, not per capita, values and must be seen in the context of population growth of greater than 2.5% per annum. The per capita GDP has been falling in nearly every year of the last thirteen; the current value is about US$2700. Moreover, if the actual GDP grows 1%, employment grows about .5%. Unemployment is now running at about 40%, so unless growth can be sustained at about 7% per annum for the next 20 years, the massive socially divisive unemployment problem will not go away.
Which brings us to education, God help us all.

As Australians have been told at boring length, to compete in the world economy a country needs a skilled workforce. I will not talk about universities (another day another article perhaps) but schools. Segall's theorem states that if schools have been deliberately made worse from one year to the next, as has been government policy under white minority rule, then they will continue to get worse. The theorem rests on two propositions. First, the more recent teachers will have been worse taught. Second, in-service teacher education is ineffective in sufficiently bad schools. The former is obvious and there is empirical evidence in South Africa for the latter.

It is difficult for people to be honest about the situation in the former Department of Education and Training schools. These were the schools for Africans, where pupils were not intended to learn and where brave pupils violently demonstrated against the regime. As a consequence, these schools are now an undisciplined shambles and they are not improving. Most teachers are totally alienated and demoralised and many are hopelessly incompetent, not only with regard to teaching skills but also with regard to their own comprehension of the subject matter. So, if they wanted to teach, which many do not, they could not. From participant observer research work in urban township schools, very little teaching is going on. The schools are not controlled by the principal or indeed by anyone. Certainly, from my own experience with some of the upper echelon in a bridging program for university entrance, with students who have matriculated, these reports are not an exaggeration.

What is the answer? Apart from optimism, I do not have one. It is going to be a long slog and it will have to start by improving the best of the township schools. Reasonably good township schools are few in number and the first battle must be to gain acceptance of improving them. Although this is seen by some as an elitist approach (there are those who would rather take on the impossible task of improving all township schools) I believe it is the only way a beginning can be made on the process of widening the skills base in South Africa. At present a high proportion of the national budget is spent on education. The government cannot afford to increase it.


dear editor,

much has been discussed about integrating several disciplines to achieve a holistically trained/educated person. How can this be achieved? Inter-university seminars, cross disciplinary lectures, and research involving two or more experts are the most obvious approaches. Have questionnaires been sent out to everyone to obtain opinions and proposals? I have a more specific suggestion that would, no doubt (?), induce most researchers to cooperate in one particular holistic/synectics effort.

One all-disciplines-transcending general topic would be “methodologies”, which could be narrowed down to “predictive methodologies”. As everyone knows, each humanity (philosophy, history, sociology, psychology, politics/diplomacy, etc) and science discipline (basic ones like physics and derived or hybrid ones like geology, ecology, environmental studies, etc) has its own methodology of collecting-treating-interpreting-extrapolating information. Many examples exist where experts of different disciplines have studied the same problem and have offered often opposing results. Forensic science comes to mind! However, there is an absence of a comprehensive comparative/contrastive overview of all these methodological philosophies.

May I suggest that a national or an international conference ought to be planned to bring together representatives of all disciplines to commence such a comparative investigation? Contact me for additional information.

Dr K H Wolf
Eastwood NSW 2122

Dear editor,

edition 3/95 contained an article on cycleways and in it was the statement that “when, and if, more people cycle to the University as a result of better access, the University will provide the required bike racks, security measures and other facilities required by cyclists.”

as a former permanent and now casual member of staff, I have always had the privilege of secure parking for my bike (ie in the office). The number of bicycles already seen chained to trees, posts etc surely indicates the need - now- for “bike racks, security measures and other facilities” or are we to read this to mean “when enough bikes get trashed or stolen so as to noticeably reduce- the number coming onto campus, we’ll think about doing something”?

Surely these measures, not just better access, are sensibly part of the encouragement necessary to reduce the motor traffic on campus.

John A Lambert
Centre for Literary and Linguistic Computing

An academic gent named Raoul
Supported the Super League bowl
They sought a nice ground
That was not out of bound
Where the Mariners could go on the prowl

Brigitte Conelius, Accounts Payable
PIZZAS, PhD'S AND PARTIES

There can’t be too many people who can say with all honesty that they have eaten a Swedish Chinese kebab pizza. But John O’Connor, the Head of the Physics Department can. It was one of the culinary highlights of his recent visit to Sweden. (More of the reason for the trip in a moment but first the pizza),

“It was served in a Chinese restaurant in Lund and when I saw it on the menu I just had to have it,” Dr O’Connor said. “Clearly the curiosity of the scientist got the better of me and when it appeared it was even worse than I had anticipated. On the plate was a large doughy round which seemed only to be half cooked. I think it had a pretty thin layer of tomatoes over it and the herbs were Chinese. Sitting in the middle of the doughy round were what I’d call rissoles. Mercifully the skewers had been removed. It wasn’t a pretty sight and it tasted worse. But what was even worse than the taste was the price - it cost me the equivalent of nearly $20!”

Such are the perils of international travel.

Dr O’Connor had been invited to Sweden by his counterpart at Lund University to take part as the “opponent” in the public examination of a PhD student whose thesis in physics was being assessed. (If you think it’s tough getting a PhD in Australia you should try the Swedish system. Not only do you have your thesis examined by local and external examiners but having got that far, you then have to take part in a ceremony which goes back centuries in which the public, the examination panel, your colleagues, teachers, friends and relatives are invited to a large lecture theatre where your thesis is judged under a form of cross examination).

“Imagine this,” Dr O’Connor said. “We are all invited into the lecture theatre. On the stage facing the audience are two tables - one on the left which was mine and the other on the right was the student’s. In the middle is the overhead projector. In the front row is the examination panel who have read the thesis and whose job it is after the student has undergone the cross examination, to pronounce whether or not the thesis has passed.

“First up is the student who presents his error list (in this instance the candidate was male) - all the typos and such that have been picked up after the thesis was printed. He then has to give a presentation of about 10 to 15 minutes complete with overheads explaining his research. Then, as the opponent, my job is to give the audience a run down on the thesis, to explain to them what it is about and how it fits in to the wider perspective of physics research generally. It takes me about 20 minutes or so and during it the poor candidate sits quietly back at his desk waiting for the worst part. That comes next and takes about an hour and in that time I cross examine him on every part of his work. The opponent stands to carry out the cross examination, so it’s very much like being a barrister at a trial and I’m sure the student feels somewhat like the accused,” Dr O’Connor said.

“Following that the examination panel spends another 15 minutes or so asking the candidate questions and then it’s over to the general audience. When the questions are finished the examination panel then adjourns to another room to deliberate. This takes about 20 minutes or so and while they are “considering their verdict”, the members of the audience get up and stretch their legs and chat. Eventually the verdict is returned and happily the student has passed. There is much jubilation and off we all go. But that’s not the end of it. What takes place that evening can only be described as rather like a wedding without the bride. Custom dictates that the student will throw a semi formal dinner party for all who took part in the ceremony earlier in the day. It takes place in a venue rather like a wedding reception place. The tables are all laid out formally. Everyone eats and drinks and then speeches are made about the candidate - some of them just like at a wedding with words like “I remember him when he was only three” - that kind of thing. It was an amazing experience.”

Would Dr O’Connor want to go through it again? “I wouldn’t hesitate. It was actually quite fun. Next time, though, I’ll skip the pizza!”
THE INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR

by Ann Moyal

The following is an extract from the opening address given at a seminar at the National Library of Australia in August at which the first national association of its kind in the world - The Independent Scholars Association of Australia (ISAA) - was launched.

The move towards forming an Association of Independent Scholars in Australia took shape as I was writing the last chapter of my autobiography* and reflecting seriously on my own role and the challenge of working outside a university or other institution. I called the chapter “The Independent Scholar”. In truncated form, it relates to my professional life since 1979 when I dropped, dramatically, out of academia from a senior post as Director of the Science Policy Research Centre at Griffith University, after a very bad experience with a hostile Vice-Chancellor, and I determined that I would never be a tenured academic again.

Since that time I have worked largely from modest grants, funded as a “private grantee” of the Australian Research Council. At the same time, I have continued to serve as an “independent academic” conducting - unpaid - all the tasks of a university academic: publishing books and papers; giving conference papers; refereeing journal articles; assessing for grant bodies; examining theses; refereeing for colleagues; acting as Honorary Editor of Search; helping found the scholarly journal Prometheus; mentoring young colleagues, and taking part as a science policy and telecommunication analyst and historian in critical community and media debate.

And across these last sixteen years, I’ve come in contact with a range of other independent scholars, men and women of wide experience and learning. Some, inevitably, have been women in research and teaching who, despite high quality, have been marginalised in the university system, penetrating it through short term contracts, or clustering as tutors or research assistants. Others have left institutions either from choice, or forced redundancies. Several are ARC Research Fellows or Senior Research Fellows, who with Fellowships complete, wonder where they might go. Still others have been obliged to leave contracting university departments and conduct their scholarly research and writing as an adjunct to other gainful employment. And in my peregrinations, I’ve also been struck by the many unremunerated academics attached to Australian universities as Honorary Research or Senior Research Associates, who lend their names and ongoing research publications in return for a letterhead, and, if fortunate, some facilities.

I have, hence, become aware of a regiment of interesting and productive independent scholars of diversity and distinction who, by tough struggle and determination, contribute significantly to our knowledge and understanding of society, yet are invisible to that society as a whole. In addition, there is a valuable corps of young and “late-age” postgraduate researchers in the humanities and social sciences working for a PhD, many in great isolation, and only tenuously attached to their affiliated institution. It is this sense of isolation, this sense of lack of community and connectedness, that marks us all.

I have come, then, to perceive a striking company - and a growing company - of Australian intellectuals who have in common the research and publishing of monographs and articles in various fields without the benefit of institutional support but who constitute a key resource. Indeed, it appears that independent scholars’ work is often more stimulating and more accessible than that proceeding in the social sciences from the universities. For as Sydney academic and columnist, Don Anderson, points out, pressures for “political correctness” of thought and expression in some universities pose questions about whether the universities remain the traditional bastions of liberty, intellectual dissent and criticism they were once deemed to be.

I might have continued merely ruminating about this interesting congregation had I not become associated with the Centre for Australian Studies in Canberra and found that its Director, Dr David Headon, himself firmly fixed in academia, shared many of my thoughts. In our discussions, we enlarged our notion of independent scholars. We added those who might eschew the term “academic” but who are independently making contributions to an intellectual critique of society through film, documentaries, and script writing, and through accumulations of major work in journalism. There are, too, members of the bureaucracy pursuing scholarship over and above their daily tasks, and a growing corps of retired academics who continue to pursue scholarly work. The scope is interdisciplinary and a natural bias towards the humanities and social sciences did not, we concluded, preclude researchers from other fields.
With the joint sponsorship of the Centre and the National Library of Australia - that great powerhouse for independent scholars - this important seminar took form.

It is crucial to underline the two-edged meaning of “independence”. Nugget Coombes, one of Australia’s outstanding independent intellectuals, on a recent ABC Radio discussion, noted what he saw as “a declining moral dimension of the intelligentsia”. “The battle of ideas”, he said, “is being won by an uncaring corporate society with no sense of community obligation.” The intelligentsia of State-funded academia and the bureaucracy, he maintained, now focussed on the structures around them and it was less and less acceptable for academics to criticise the State. “The intelligentsia”, Coombes asserted, of these two arenas, “have sold out.”

His criticism is pertinent for this Association. In a time when universities and bureaucracies are undergoing major change, we believe there are compelling reasons for the establishment of an Australian Association of Independent Scholars. We propose to provide a forum to stimulate informed, constructive and critical debate, and to contribute to the public sphere. Here, the Association will welcome the affiliate membership of practising academics who, while in gainful employment, are attracted to this second concept of “independence”. Our goals are several.

1. To create a community of independent scholars and participant intellectuals who, through membership, can achieve a sense of congregation and connection where contacts and collegiate networks can be maintained.
2. To give public visibility and a public profile to this sector of national talent, promote awareness of its diversity and contribution, and offer the Association’s membership as a national resource.
3. To maintain a database register of members that will be available to members, government, the private sector, and the media in search of people whose expertise would be of value.
4. To seek access for independent scholars to funding through existing or new grant schemes and to secure their participation in government funding support for the “Creative Nation”.
5. To represent members and their interests in public, institutional, and financial matters.
6. To offer a forum, through occasional seminars and conferences, on questions of national interest and significance.
7. To publish a regular newsletter.

Footnote: Enquiries and names for entry on the database, with area of research interest, should be directed to Dr David Headon, English Department, University College, Australian Defence Force Academy, Campbell, ACT 2601 or email d-headon@adfa.oz.au

There was a grand lady called Cheong Whose feelings about academics were strong She offered them wine To attend and pass time At the graduation event that went wrong

Jane Mariani, Accounts Payable

At the Newcastle Uni graduation Many staff didn’t attend the occasion Said Gem with a wink I’ll give ‘em free drink That’ll ensure they’ll stay for the duration

Paul Scott, Communication and Media Arts
THE ART OF EVASION

Sooner or later, most university meetings become a desperate attempt to escape from the problem under discussion. This is often done clumsily, causing unnecessary embarrassment and leaving the group without the comfortable feeling of having dealt with the matter appropriately. If you have been experiencing this feeling of discomfort then take heart. A list (but by no means a definitive list) of highly successful techniques for problem disposal has been delivered anonymously to VGE. We pass them on as a community service.

1. Find a scape-goat. Academic staff can always blame administrators, administrators can blame academic staff, both can blame students, and everyone can blame the social order.
2. Profess not to have the answer. This lets you out of having any answer.
3. Say that we must not move too rapidly. This avoids the necessity of moving at all.
4. For every proposal, set up an opposite and conclude that the "middle ground" represents the wisest course of action.
5. Point out that an attempt to reach a conclusion is only a futile "quest for certainty". Doubt and indecision promote growth.
6. When in a tight place, say something which the group cannot understand. A plethora of polysyllabic phrases precludes perspicacity.
7. Look slightly embarrassed when the problem is brought up. Hint that it is in bad taste or too elementary for mature consideration or that any discussion of it is likely to be misunderstood by outsiders.
8. Say that the problem "cannot be separated" from other problems; therefore, no problem can be solved until all other problems have been solved.
9. Carry the problem into other fields; show that it exists everywhere, hence is of no concern.
10. Point out that those who see the problem do so by virtue of personality traits: eg, they are unhappy and transfer their dissatisfaction to the area under discussion.
11. Ask what is meant by the question. When it is clarified there will be no time left for the answer.
12. Discover that there are all sorts of "dangers" in any specific formulation of, conclusions: dangers of exceeding authority or seeming to, of asserting more than is definitely known, of misinterpretation, or misuse by the uninformed.
13. Look for some philosophical basis for settling the problem, then a basis for that, then a basis for that, and so on.
14. Retreat from the problem into endless discussion of various techniques for approaching it.
15. Retreat into general objectives on which everyone can agree but which suggest no content and no changes in the present program.
16. Find a face-saving verbal formula eg "in a Pickwickian sense" which means nothing but which everyone will accept because they can read into it their own interpretation. This is the highest art of the good administrator.
17. Rationalise the status quo with minor improvements.
18. Retreat into analogies and discuss them until everyone has forgotten the original problem.
19. Appoint a committee. Ad hoc, of course.
20. Wait until some expert can be consulted.
21. Conclude that you have all clarified your thinking on the problem, even though no definite conclusions have been reached.
22. Point out that some of the greatest minds have struggled with this problem, implying that it does the group credit to have even thought of it.

Merry Christmas
### THE EAR
**DEADLINE AND PUBLISHING DATES 1996**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ISSUE</th>
<th>Copy deadline</th>
<th>Distribution date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ISSUE 1</td>
<td>Copy deadline: 13 February (10am)</td>
<td>Distribution date: 27 February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISSUE 2</td>
<td>Copy deadline: 5 March (10am)</td>
<td>Distribution date: 19 March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISSUE 3 (Inner Ear only)</td>
<td>Copy deadline: 26 March (10am)</td>
<td>Distribution date: 9 April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISSUE 4</td>
<td>Copy deadline: 19 April (10am)</td>
<td>Distribution date: 30 April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISSUE 5</td>
<td>Copy deadline: 7 May (10am)</td>
<td>Distribution date: 21 May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISSUE 6</td>
<td>Copy deadline: 28 May (10am)</td>
<td>Distribution date: 11 June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISSUE 7</td>
<td>Copy deadline: 18 June (10am)</td>
<td>Distribution date: 2 July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISSUE 8 (Inner Ear only)</td>
<td>Copy deadline: 9 July (10am)</td>
<td>Distribution date: 23 July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISSUE 9</td>
<td>Copy deadline: 30 July (10am)</td>
<td>Distribution date: 13 August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISSUE 10</td>
<td>Copy deadline: 20 August (10am)</td>
<td>Distribution date: 3 September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISSUE 11</td>
<td>Copy deadline: 10 September (10am)</td>
<td>Distribution date: 24 September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISSUE 12 (Inner Ear only)</td>
<td>Copy deadline: 1 October (10am)</td>
<td>Distribution date: 15 October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISSUE 13</td>
<td>Copy deadline: 22 October (10am)</td>
<td>Distribution date: 5 November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHRISTMAS EDITION</td>
<td>Copy deadline: 26 November (10am)</td>
<td>Distribution date: 10 December</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

An issue of growing contention
Which warrants our urgent attention
Research gets the lolly
In the promotion list folly
While good teachers rate hardly a mention

Neil Wright, Department of Education