Across the divide
Student teachers hone their skills in rural schools

An inconvenient truth
Why is it so hard to design good public toilets?

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Ugandan outreach program changing women’s lives
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Throughout history, humans have been sceptical about technological innovation. The Victorians fretted that wireless telegraphs would cause people to forget how to talk to each other. Fast forward to today and there are concerns about the risk of robots pushing more and more people out of jobs. Many of the concerns about artificial intelligence are understandable but we can also take an optimistic perspective. What if we imagined how machine learning might make our experience of the world better, not worse?

This issue’s cover story explores how Professor Mari Veloakis and her colleagues at UNSW’s Creative Robotics Lab are addressing that question. Their work shows how robots can be an extraordinarily positive force in people’s lives.

Be inspired by Paro the fluffy white seal, who helps dementia patients communicate, or Kaspar, who helps children with Autism.

Dr Mari Veloakis

Cover image: Professor Mari Veloakis in red Hugh interaction between humanity and machines.

Photo: Quentin Jones

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Australian of the Year

Michelle Simmons 2018 AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR

I came to Australia because I believed it would allow me to realise my dreams. I was warmly welcomed and have found that both the research and business communities have backed me.

Together we’ve done some amazing things. And I pinch myself every day because what we’re doing at the University of NSW in Sydney is extraordinary.

We’re pushing the frontiers of technology to manipulate individual atoms to create devices that have never existed before. And atoms are totally unforgiving.

My team takes on incredibly hard scientific challenges. They’re people with huge grit and determination. And they’re going to need it.

Ultimately, we’ve set ourselves an audacious goal. We want to build not just a quantum computer, but a quantum computing industry here in Australia. We’re up against the likes of Google, IBM and Microsoft. And if I lived in any other country in the world I’d be worried.

But we’ve proven time and again that Australian researchers have some unique advantages. We collaborate across boundaries, but we also compete hard. We’re down to earth. We’re judged by results and of who you are. Know that reward comes from hard work, and that some of the biggest rewards come from taking on the biggest challenges.

Unlike me, you don’t have to go overseas to realise your dreams. You can realise them right here. Look into your heart and look to your own land.

This is an edited version of the acceptance speech given by Professor Michelle Simmons at the 2018 Australian of the Year announcement ceremony at Parliament House, Canberra, on January 25.

Michelle Simmons 2018 AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR

I’m also a woman in a man’s world. Throughout my career I’ve found that people often underestimate female scientists. In some ways for me that’s been great. I’ve flown under the radar and been able to get on with things. But I’m also conscious that when a person starts to believe in what others think of them, that belief can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. And that is one reason why I feel it is important not to be defined by other people’s expectations of who you are or what you might be. I do believe that women think differently, and that diversity of thought is invaluable to technological and research development.

I’m not a fan of mandating there are equal numbers of men and women in every job. But I am a fan of ensuring that all young people, both male and female, pursue what they love. They set their sights high, they tackle the hardest challenges in life, and they are the creators, not just the users of technology.

Some of this can be instilled in schools and in universities, but much of it has got to come from within. And this is true for anyone, but particularly for women. In the same way that you have got to defy the expectations of others, you also have to defy the expectations you place on yourself.

So, in my life I’ve lived to four mantras: do what’s hard, place high expectations on yourself, take risks and do something that matters. And these ideas have kept me going when things have got tough.

But I’ve also come to realise I’m very fortunate to live in a country that not only accepts these ideals but celebrates them. And that says something very important about Australian society.

I say to all those young people out there who have got dreams that they are following: be proud of your country because really excellent stuff comes from hard work, and that some of the biggest rewards come from taking on the biggest challenges.

Michelle Simmons was named 2018 Australian of the Year in recognition of her pioneering research and leadership in quantum computing.
In the first deal of its kind in the world university sector, UNSW Sydney reached an agreement with Maoneng Australia and Origin Energy to have 100% of its energy supplied by photovoltaic solar energy. The 15-year solar supply agreement with Maoneng, which for the first time brings together a retailer, developer and corporate, will allow UNSW to achieve its goal of carbon neutrality on energy use by 2020. UNSW believes this is the first university worldwide to fully generate carbon neutral with 100% of its needs supplied by solar photovoltaic (PV).

“This landmark initiative is an exciting step towards realising UNSW’s goal of carbon neutrality on energy use by 2020 and reflects our commitment to making a positive global impact,” said UNSW President and Vice-Chancellor Professor Ian Jacobs. “The Solar FPA arrangement will allow UNSW to secure emission-free electricity supplies at a cost which is economically and environmentally attractive when compared to fossil fuel-sourced supplies.”

 Jacobs said the deal was a testament to the world-class research carried out at UNSW. “UNSW researchers, in particular Professor Martin Green and the late Professor Stuart Wenham and their teams, have been instrumental in ensuring that solar energy is affordable and accessible to all – this deal is a testament to their work,” he said.

Under the agreement, UNSW will purchase up to 124,000 MWh of renewable energy per annum from Maoneng’s Bunyarsia Solar Farm near Balranald in south-western NSW, meeting UNSW’s annual energy requirement starting in 2019. A three-year retailer firming contract was also signed with Origin, as the electricity retailer, to manage the intermittency of solar production.

NSW Minister for the Environment Gabrielle Upton was on hand for the launch of the world’s first e-waste microfactory at UNSW Sydney.

Using technology developed following extensive scientific research at UNSW’s Centre for Sustainable Materials Research and Technology (SMART Centre), the e-waste microfactory has the potential to reduce the rapidly growing environmental problem of vast amounts of electronic waste.

Upton said it was pleasing to launch a NSW home-grown solution to the waste challenge facing communities all over the world.

“It is exciting to see innovations such as this prototype microfactory and the potential they have to reduce waste,” she added.

SMART Centre Director Professor Venea Sahajwalla said the e-waste microfactory was the first of a series of microfactories under development and in testing at UNSW that could also turn many types of consumer waste such as glass, plastic and timber into commercial materials and products.

For instance, old computer circuit boards can be transformed into valuable metal alloys such as copper and tin, and glass and plastic from e-devices can be converted into microsatellites used in industrial-grade ceramic and plastic filaments for 3D printing. “These microfactories can transform waste where it is stockpiled and created, enabling local businesses and communities to not only tackle local waste problems but to develop a commercial opportunity from the valuable materials that are created,” Sahajwalla said.

UNSW’s modular microfactories can operate on a site as small as 50 square metres and can be located wherever waste may be stockpiled and created, enabling not only the re-forming of waste products wherever waste may be stockpiled. A microfactory is one or a series of small machines and devices that use patented technology to perform one or more functions in the re-forming of waste products into new and usable resources.

NSW has developed the technology with support from the Australian Research Council and is now in partnership with a number of businesses and organisations including e-waste recycler TES, mining manufacturer Moly-Cop, and spectacle maker Dreyer.

**INNOVATIVE NSW ALLIANCE GETS CEO**

- Prof Black has been appointed CEO of the NSW Alliance for Sustainable Materials Research and Technology (SMART Centre), the e-waste microfactory has the potential to reduce the rapidly growing environmental problem of vast amounts of electronic waste.

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**PROGRAM TARGETS FINANCIAL LITERACY**

- UNSW Sydney has taken the lead on promoting financial literacy and independence among young people, launching its Financial Inclusion Action Plan (FIAP) in 2015. The FIAP is the largest educational initiative to promote financial literacy in NSW, sponsored by Deputy Government Architect, and Executive Director roles at the Sydney Harbour Forensics Authority and Sydney Olympic Park Authority.

**NOTICE TO STUDENTS**

- UNSW has received 43% of the overall amount in the Group of Eight (Go8). UNSW received 47% of the overall total ARC funding of $2.7 million, strongest respectively in research on marine pollution, coastal hazards, ocean weather, antibiotic use, and Aboriginal health and wellbeing. Professor Nicholas Fisk, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) at UNSW, said “this funding will help us to continue our vital role universities play in tackling society’s biggest challenges to achieve the world’s greatest outcomes for Australia.”
New research underpins world-class national security

UNSW Canberra launched the new UNSW Defence Research Institute in February to deliver world-class research to enhance Australia’s security. The UNSW Defence Research Institute draws on the expertise of researchers from UNSW Sydney and Canberra, to provide Defence with solutions to world issues.

Headquartered at UNSW Canberra, the institute was officially launched by UNSW President and Vice-Chancellor Professor Ian Jacobs. This was followed by celebrations at Parliament House to mark the 50th anniversary of educating Australia’s future military leaders at UNSW Canberra.

“World-class defence research with world-class research,” Jacobs said. “UNSW Canberra has 50 years’ anniversary of educating Australia’s future military leaders at UNSW Canberra.

“World-class defence research with world-class research,” Jacobs said. “UNSW Canberra has 50 years’ experience partnering with Defence and a 50-year history of excellence in researching in global issues.

“The UNSW Defence Research Institute will combine our strengths and lead the way for the next 50 years and beyond.”

Human Rights Institute aims for global change

The Australian Human Rights Institute at UNSW Sydney was launched in March, and is billed for highlighting the potential for collaborative research and the potential for young people to use their technology, develop and power to make positive change.

The launch was hosted by ABC broadcaster Fran Kelly and featured a panel discussion with Anggita Situmorang, The George Institute Executive Director Professor Vlado Szubanski, The Australian Human Rights Institute aims for global change.

“The Judith Neilson Chair provides an important platform and the broader campus. It was considered a cutting-edge architectural statement as Sydney’s first circular building.

“UNSW appoints first Judith Neilson Chair of Contemporary Art

It is probably fair to assume that one of the first steps for Professor Paul Gladston after he arrives in Sydney from the UK will be the White Rabbit Gallery in Chippendale.

As a leading expert, UNSW Canberra’s Judith Neilson Chair of Contemporary Art, Gladston (pictured) will be looking to make use of his access to the White Rabbit Collection, one of the world’s most significant collections of contemporary Chinese art and an invaluable research resource and focus for critical debate.

Established in February 2017 with a $6 million gift from philanthropist and White Rabbit Gallery founder Judith Neilson, the Chair is aimed at developing new knowledge and a better critical understanding of the global significance of contemporary art and culture.

Gladston, one of the world’s leading experts on Chinese contemporary art and culture, will be based at UNSW Art & Design from May, leading scholarly research into contemporary art, and helps expand our expertise in contemporary Chinese art in a global and historic context,” Harper said.

“I am very excited about developing what I hope will be an internationally recognised focus for scholarly, curatorial and artistic excellence.”

Founder and director of White Rabbit Gallery Judith Neilson said she established this Chair to support a leading scholar to deepen the intellectual rigour of research into global contemporary art.

“We have found that in Professor Gladston. We must give the work, the artists, and the distinctive and shared traditions the rigorous critical attention they deserve, and I look forward to working with him to achieve this,” Neilson said.

Yu-Chieh Li, Adjunct Researcher at Tate Modern said: “We have found that in Professor Gladston. His expertise and academic leadership will enhance UNSW’s global excellence in this field and help expand our expertise in contemporary Chinese art in a global and historic context.”

The scaffolding came down and the volume went up following the refurbishment of UNSW Sydney’s iconic Roundhouse – the venue of choice for the biggest music acts for nearly six decades.

The Roundhouse was officially re- opened on 15 March at a VIP event that featured speeches from President and Vice-Chancellor Professor Ian Jacobs and former Vice-Chancellor Professor John Niiran, a member of the Student Union board when the Roundhouse opened in 1965. The doors were then opened to students and the public as indie-pop band San Cisco (pictured) performed to a sold-out crowd.

The redevelopment comprises new building services, new energy-efficient exterior lighting and a refurbishment of its interior that respects the heritage of the building while adding new functionality. Landscape improvements underway will connect to Anzac Parade, the future light rail platform and the broader campus.

The Roundhouse has long been a significant venue in Sydney’s live music scene. Conceived in 1961, it was designed by the Government Architect and Edwards, Hadland, Torrisi, Briggs Architects, and is now the National Gallery and High Court in Canberra. It was considered a cutting-edge architectural statement as Sydney’s first circular building.

The venue has hosted a diverse range of events over the past 56 years, including wedding receptions, circus Balls, boxing matches, comedy nights, theatre shows, formal dinners, dance parties and even a corina line protest.

Music acts have included Billy Thorpe and the Aztecs, Ratcat, Fatboy Slim, Foo Fighters, The Living End, Green Day, INXS and Nick Cave.
Dani Cooper reports on a program backed by UNSW and the NSW Department of Education that places student teachers in rural and remote schools.

When UNSW Sydney student teacher Danielle Barisa drove for seven hours over the Blue Mountains and out beyond the Bathurst Plains to Coonabarabran in 2016, it was the first time she had really ventured west. Besides a childhood visit to a Mudgee farmstay that she barely remembered, her life had been spent on the Central Coast north of Sydney. The interior of NSW was a mystery to the then 23-year-old.

Barisa admits to a sense of trepidation taking up the offer to do the final practicum of her Education (Master’s) at Coonabarabran High School. “Everyone was kind of warning me against it, but I tried not to think about it … I treated it as a new opportunity and just went for it.”

Her displacement from life in Sydney’s Dulwich Hill was symbolised by her arrival in the town of 3000 people. “The guy [I was hiring a car from] knew I was coming out to the country and said, ‘I know you’re going out to the country so I thought I’d pick a special car’ and I’m thinking this is going to be great because I’d get to the hire place and the car’s hot pink,” she recalls.

“Everyone in Coonabarabran certainly knew when I arrived. I was this blonde thing with a hot pink car. I must have looked like such an idiot – I definitely made a statement, for sure.” A year later Barisa now calls Coonabarabran home, has found love with a local farmer and secured a year-long position as a teacher at the local high school.

“The secondary program is gaining momentum. From the 2016 intake of just three interns in one school, in 2017 nine students were placed in four rural and remote schools – Coonabarabran, Lightning Ridge, Wade and Griffith – and the placement scheme is gaining momentum. Under the scheme student teachers are able to spend the last four weeks managing a classroom on their own with intermittent support and guidance. Davison says this is a key to the program’s success. “It provides our students with a bridging experience before they are on their own … and they can be a bit more innovative and right on top of pedagogy and are ready to try new approaches to teaching and learning, so it re-energises staff in their own pedagogy,” Davison says.

Davison is not surprised by that view: “It’s the whole reciprocal teaching process that is energising. It’s triggered by experienced teachers being challenged and questioned to explain why they are doing what they are doing. I think it has a particular impact in the country because country teachers don’t always get the same professional learning opportunities as city teachers … this is in-your-face-24-hours thinking about and talking about a whole range of different aspects of your practice, deeply contextualised and exemplified by the students that are in your class at that time with someone who is like a critical friend.”

The program is now in its second year and has expanded into other schools. Davison’s commitment extends to being UNSW’s supervising academic for the rural and remote schools where students are placed: “I feel we have a particular responsibility here to ensure those placements work to their very best and everybody achieves what they want to achieve from them.”

In the second placement scheme is gaining momentum. From the 2016 intake of just three interns in one school, in 2017 nine students were placed in four rural and remote schools – Coonabarabran, Lightning Ridge, Wade and Griffith. “I wasn’t sure what it would be like and it was great, but it’s a great place to live, the people are friendly,” Willoughby says.

Fellow 2017 intern Russell Willoughby has been teaching science and senior biology at Wade High School in Griffith. Willoughby also saw the rural placement as an opportunity to gain experiences he wouldn’t get in a metropolitan school.

“I was still trying to discover what my teaching philosophy was and I thought that a rural placement would help me determine what sort of school I would like to work in, as my first practicum was at an independent school on the north coast of Sydney,” he says. Willoughby found it challenging to be separated from friends and family but he found it easy to immerse himself in the community. “I quickly created new friendships in Griffith and found the school and the community, as a whole, to be very supportive and welcoming. I loved the culture of the town; it was very relaxing and a beautiful part of the world. I always had something new, fun or exciting to do on the weekends.”

As those who went west have found, the experience is life-altering. The secondary middle-school program and Willoughby is rethinking his career ambitions.

“I would say it in the context of how far I’ve come. Originally I was participating in the rural program for my own gain and I wasn’t planning to work in a rural location. But it’s great place to live, the people are great and the students really rely on school as a social, mental and emotional support,” Willoughby says.

“As teachers we have a big responsibility and impact on these students. Now, I would love to work in a similar location.”
When discussion turns to robots, it is often to lament the prospect of automated industrial machines replacing humans in the workplace. Professor Mari Velonaki envisions a less gloomy future: “We are not interested in building machines that will replace humans; we are interested in creating systems that enhance humans,” she says.

As the Director of UNSW’s Creative Robotics Lab, Velonaki has spent the past five years leading a pioneering multidisciplinary team from UNSW Art & Design, the School of Computer Science & Engineering and the School of Psychology to discover how humans can interact with robots to benefit society.

Over the next year, the lab will play a leading role in the establishment of the new National Facility for Human-Robot Interaction Research and introduce a new multidisciplinary undergraduate program in social robotics. “We take a very strong position in our lab about social robotics and why we need to develop new technologies,” Velonaki says. “Ideologically, we believe that if you are going to put all the resources, human and material, into designing a new technological system, it has to have a positive function in society.”

That ideology is obvious in a recent collaboration with the Fuji Xerox Technology Group, in which the Creative Robotics Lab developed a social robot to enhance workplace experiences for employees by streamlining administrative tasks, giving them more time to create and collaborate. The robot, which is being tested in Fuji Xerox’s offices in Japan, will gather data from the interactions to inform future research and development in social robotics. (See page 12)

Two other robots, Paro and Kaspar, act as psychological enrichment tools for use in research in the Creative Robotics Lab. Paro is a fluffy white seal built to help people with dementia to communicate. The patients respond to Paro because it feels good to touch and encourages conversation. Interestingly, Paro became a conversation starter for people who were very reclusive and didn’t want to interact with anything,” Velonaki says.

Kaspar is a doll-like social robot that teaches children with Autism Spectrum Disorder to feel more comfortable with social interaction. He might look plain but his mask-like features were based on feedback from children with the disorder. “Even with mild range autism, children don’t feel comfortable with face-to-face gazing. They were comfortable with Kaspar so they were going to learn from that,” Velonaki says.

The National Facility for Human Robot Interaction Research, which will open in mid-2018, is a partnership between UNSW (Art & Design, School of Computer Science and Engineering, School of Psychology), UTS (Centre for Autonomous Systems), the University of Sydney (Australian Centre for Field Robotics, School of Information Technologies) and St Vincent’s Hospital (Department of Rehabilitation Medicine). It includes a test space equipped with a fully functional kitchen and more than 200 sensors, unidirectional microphones, infrared cameras and lasers that can record real-time information about human interactions as rehab patients move around within it.

“The facility will be a game changer because we will be able to unobtrusively collect extremely important data about how a person going through rehabilitation operates in space without them having to wear any sensors,” Velonaki says. “I think it will also...

CONTINUED PAGE 12
In this page, the text is discussing the development and placement of a social robot designed to enhance creativity and human-robot interaction. The robot, named Kaspar, has been developed by the Research Technology Group in Japan and was used in a pilot study at the National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation in Tokyo. The robot is designed to promote creativity and social interactions in the workplace.

The text also mentions the importance of social robotics in education and healthcare. The UNSW Creative Robotics Lab, in collaboration with Fuji Xerox, is developing a social robot to assist with educational and organisational tasks, allowing workers to focus on creative tasks. The lab is part of the Australian Research Council-funded research in robotics and social robotics at UNSW.

The text concludes by highlighting the importance of human-robot interaction and the need for further research in this field. It mentions the role of educators in shaping the future of society and the importance of play in education. The text also references the work of renowned Finnish education expert Pasi Sahlberg, who advocates for play and educational access as core principles of the Finnish education system.
Workplaces confront the sexual revolution

From BusinessThink

Sexual harassment is a serious issue wherever it happens, but where it occurs in an organisational context it becomes a serious health and safety hazard for employers. The historic failure by companies and individuals responsible for employee wellbeing to address sexual harassment has been brought into sharp focus since American movie mogul Harvey Weinstein was exposed as a sexual offender.

Women's experience of sexual harassment and intimidation goes to the heart of gender politics, particularly in the workplace.

According to Ruana Fileborn, a lecturer in criminology in the School of Social Sciences at UNSW Sydney, one of the underlying causes of sexual violence and sexual harassment is gender inequality.

“We need to be looking at bigger issues, such as the pay gap and treatment of women in the workplace – these are part of that broader cultural background that enables sexual harassment and sexual violence to happen,” Fileborn says.

Beyond Hollywood, the media, academic and government have thrown up cases of misconduct that has become almost institutionalised, or at least tacitly accepted through people turning a blind eye.

The accusers have cut across traditional class divisions - high-powered women as well as women in low-income, service industry jobs have come together in the #MeToo campaign to air their grievances, enabled by the power and reach of social media.

“Social media has played a hugely influential role in all of it,” says Fileborn. That has “influenced power dynamics by creating spaces and platforms for people to share their experiences”.

Easier ‘Not to Know’

Social media may also have put paid to the days when an employee made an allegation to HR, and HR took time to investigate it while keeping it under wraps until a resolution had been arrived at.

Now HR and other senior managers are caught on the back foot wondering what to do when employees are conversing in anonymous workplace chatrooms or on a public blog about sexual harassment.

“There is no doubt that senior management may put a difficult position where cases like this arise,” says Karin Sanders, a professor and Head of the School of Management at UNSW Business School.

“How to handle a situation about which not everyone will know all the facts, and where it boils down to one person's word against another's, isn't easy. Sometimes the feeling is 'it's better not to know', it makes it a lot easier. On the other hand, it's a brave action to stand up and tell people [who are your bosses] what is allowed and not allowed,” says Sanders. That is exactly what the Australian HR Institute (AHRI) insists professional HR practitioners should be doing.

Writing in The Sydney Morning Herald, AHRI CEO Lyndel Goodear acknowledged that by standing up for fairness and natural justice on behalf of employees, HR managers may well put their careers in jeopardy.

“Chief human resource officers who find themselves reporting to chief executives who demand that their senior executives put allegiance to them above allegiance to the organisation need from a public health perspective to know more about the aggressors' use of fear of retaliation. "For instance, at UNSW we know if you have an affair with a student you're likely to be found guilty and you end up leaving the organisation instead",” McFadyen says.

Privacy isn’t the only casualty when a sexual harassment case blows up inside an organisation. The effects extend for beyond the protagonists.

Two academics at University of Texas at Arlington, M. Ann McFadyen and James Quick, found that though there has been a 28% decline in complaints in the US, sexual harassment is a continuing occupational health problem in the workplace.

“Sexual harassment in the workplace is costly, not just to the organisation,” McFadyen says.

“The behaviour impacts [on] the victim, the aggressor, bystanders, customers, suppliers and other stakeholders in terms of tarnished reputations and trust, disengaged employees, decreased commitment, turnover, depression, stress, eating and other health disorders, and in extreme cases bodily harm, even death.”

McFadyen believes that the recent publicity regarding sexual harassment is watershed moment for workplaces that could usher in new types of training not only for leaders and management but “employees at all ranks, customers, suppliers and other stakeholders”.

Both researchers believe there is a real need from a public health perspective to know more about the aggressors’ use of power in sexual harassment cases.

While access to such high profile individuals have served to keep the issue in the public eye, the hope now is that for the majority of ordinary women - and, indeed, men - the workplace can start to become a less hazardous place.

This is an edited version of an article published by UNSW BusinessThink. To read the original go online to businessthink.unsw.edu.au.

Eased ‘Not to Know’

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DRAWING THE BOUNDARIES

Fileborn suggests the prevailing view is that HR “where there actually protect the organisation rather than to support employees”.

“Having these public allegations made against your organisation is a very very bad look. I think it's perhaps seen as the path of least resistance to manage out the person who is making the complaint,” she says.

The behaviour impacts on the victim, the aggressor, bystanders, customers, suppliers and other stakeholders.

M. ANN MCFADYEN

Sanders says that often “women blame themselves or are not assertive enough to report sexual misconduct to HR and end up leaving the organisation instead.”

Or individuals who demand that their senior executives put allegiance to them above allegiance to the organisation need to know how to use the reporting process that encourages filing complaints and removes any fear of retaliation.

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McFadyen believes that the recent publicity regarding sexual harassment is watershed moment for workplaces that could usher in new types of training not only for leaders and management but “employees at all ranks, customers, suppliers and other stakeholders”.

Both researchers believe there is a real need from a public health perspective to know more about the aggressors’ use of power in sexual harassment cases.

While access to such high profile individuals have served to keep the issue in the public eye, the hope now is that for the majority of ordinary women - and, indeed, men - the workplace can start to become a less hazardous place.

This is an edited version of an article published by UNSW BusinessThink. To read the original go online to businessthink.unsw.edu.au.
W hen Dimity Kingsford Smith faced the shock of family breakdown, she had to quickly learn some practical lessons about legal and financial adjustment. Decades of research and policy work in financial regulation no doubt helped steer her through the stress and strain of divorce. But it also left Kingsford Smith with an enduring empathy for those struggling to navigate a safe path to financial stability.

“I have actually had experience of a rocky financial position, for a short period of time,” she says. “People who live their whole lives on the edge financially have my great empathy.”

That was a decade ago. Since then she has been appointed to lead the Centre for Law, Markets and Regulation at UNSW Law and joined the External Advisory Panel of the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC). She was the inaugural chair of a professional disciplinary panel in the financial sector for over half a decade. For well over two decades, she has been an independent customer advocate in National Australia Bank’s wealth division.

All of which gives Kingsford Smith a unique perspective on the revelations flowing from the Banking Royal Commission. As one of Australia’s leading experts in financial regulation, even she is surprised by the nature and breadth of the allegations.

The royal commission has heard allegations of a bribery ring at NAB branches in western Sydney, with corruption, not one well regulated like Australia Bank’s wealth division.

Kingsford Smith says regulation alone won’t fix the problems. People don’t necessarily make rational decisions, many Australians have modest financial literacy, and few have sufficient time to research public hearings in mid-March focused on home and car loans and credit cards. They were explosive. The Commission heard from one woman on Centrelink benefits who was given a car loan she couldn’t hope to repay, and of elderly Australians losing their homes.

Banking on ethics

In the 1980s, she made her way to the UK and did her post-graduate work in the midst of the “Big Bang” — the dramatic deregulation of financial markets under Margaret Thatcher. Kingsford Smith returned from academic posts in London in time to contribute to Australia’s own financial market reform.

The self-described “unrepentant nerd” has had a seat at all of the biggest moments in the evolution of financial law. But it is the models of her prudent parents and social justice-conscious law and politics professors that shape Kingsford Smith’s convictions.

“I do see the connection between law and social justice. Financial regulation is not just for the big end of town; it is also for the fair and honest treatment of ordinary financial consumers.”

before signing on the dotted line, she says. Finally, people tend to find the details boring and are generally financially disengaged. As an Arts/Law undergraduate in the 1970s, Kingsford Smith was mentioned by a newly politicised academic cohort. Her teachers were linking intellectual arguments with real life and social justice on a large scale.

In January 2018, the student-led Group Impact Engineers completed its first in-country sortie to install a clean water facility in rural Sri Lanka. Before the students left to catch their flight back to Sydney, one of the village elders rose to speak. “There are a lot of people in our village. I am old and I can’t see properly and I will die soon, but this program is so valuable to my younger generations,” she said.

“We are lucky and blessed to shine our light in a very dark corner. This is a great act of merit. May you be reborn in a time when the Buddha exists and attain the supreme bliss of Nibbana!”

Buddhist Rananwage says this impassioned speech made the reason for being there as crystal clear as the water they were aiming to provide.

“I’m Sri Lankan and prior to coming to UNSW when I was 17, I lived my whole life there. I was watching my parents struggle farmers in my country faced but had never been face to face with the problem before, so the trip was eye-opening for me,” he says of his first visit to the village.

Rananwage, who is in his third year of Chemical Engineering at UNSW Sydney, says the idea for Impact Engineers took root after he and six Sri Lankan friends (from the faculties of Engineering and Business) undertook an independent school outreach program in Sri Lanka in their first year (funded by the NSW Chapter of the Institution of Engineers Sri Lanka). They then won a hackathon run by UNSW. After we won the hackathon we decided to take a formal proposal to the Student Opportunities team at the Engineering Faculty with ideas about humanitarian projects we’d like to do in Sri Lanka. They were very supportive, providing advice and contacts which helped us clarify our ideas and get started,” Rananwage says.

In six months they had raised almost $20,000 from sponsors and a Go Fund Me campaign, consulted with multiple stakeholders in Sri Lanka and Australia, identified two villages in need of a clean water supply, and visited the villages to prepare for the installation.

“Because of our focus on consultation, when we finally reached the villages in January we didn’t find a desperate bunch of people waiting to be rescued, we found an organised group ready to hit the ground running,” Rananwage says.

The area around the two villages is primarily agricultural and produces a variety of crops, including rice, long beans, corn, lime, guava and coconut.

The villagers have long relied on a demineralised raw water system for their daily consumption. “I’m Sri Lankan and prior to coming to UNSW when I was 17, I lived my whole life there. I was watching my parents struggle farmers in my country faced but had never been face to face with the problem before, so the trip was eye-opening for me,” he says of his first visit to the village.

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“The solution is crystal clear

A student-led engineering project is bringing cleaner drinking water to Sri Lankan communities. By Penny Jones.
A UNSW outreach program in northern Uganda challenged prevailing attitudes to women’s health, writes Lucy Carroll.

When a team of UNSW Sydney researchers and students arrived in Gulu, northern Uganda, to launch a health project late last year, they weren’t sure how much interest they would receive from the locals.

After months of planning, UNSW Medicine’s Professor Robyn Richmond and representatives from UNSW and Gulu University had made the trek to Gulu, about 340 kilometres north of the capital, Kampala, to launch the Transforming Community Health Project.

The plan was to interview local women, set up cervical and breast cancer screening services and train local nurses in women’s health services. Women in northern Uganda suffer from high levels of domestic violence and have limited access to reproductive health care. But would they be prepared to speak to strangers about their experiences?

“When we arrived to start interviewing, almost 100 women had already gathered on benches under the lush evergreen mango trees in the grounds of the health centre. The mothers were caring for children, breastfeeding babies, surrounded by goats, dogs and chickens, and flanked by crops of beans,” Richmond says.

“Over the next few days the numbers of women grew. I was so surprised to see that many women wanted to talk, as we were obviously giving them something they wanted. The project is part of a five-year community health program in Gulu, driven by the UNSW Institute of Global Development, which continues a relationship formally established by Professor Ian Jacobs in 2016 with a Memorandum of Understanding between UNSW and Gulu University. The project is one of four UNSW initiatives in northern Uganda that aim to improve the lives of people in the region who have been plagued by decades of civil war.

“It profoundly affects you to see these beautiful Ugandan women who live impoverished lives and face huge delays in cancer treatment because of a lack of information, ignorance about cervical cancer and very little early detection of pre-cancerous lesions,” says Richmond, from UNSW’s School of Public Health and Community Medicine.

Child interviews were conducted in groups of three at two local health centres an hour outside Gulu. A UNSW team member asked the women questions in English and these were translated by a Gulu University student or academic into the local language, Acholi, with the answers recorded on tablets.

The survey found that many husbands did not approve of their wives using contraception, more than 40% of the women had a child who died in infancy or childhood, more than a third suffered physical abuse by their partners and 29% were hit or beaten during pregnancy.

“In northern Uganda, some women have more than 10 children because their husbands don’t want them to use contraception. It struck all of us how much the mothers are suffering from domestic violence,” Richmond says.

She found particularly harrowing the story of one woman who was living with HIV, had eight children and whose husband had poisoned himself after he had been suffering from AIDS.

She was saddened by the stories the women told them about their lives as they answered the survey questions, and the impact years of Ugandan violence and political upheaval had on them.

“There are so many public health problems because of years of insurmountable. The women and children have been the casualties,” Richmond says.

As part of the women’s project, 250 women were screened for cervical and breast cancer at the health centres, and those identified with pre-cancerous cervical lesions were treated with cryotherapy. Cervical cancer is the leading cause of cancer-related deaths among women in Uganda. With very low numbers of women screened for cervical cancer, the country has one of the highest cervical cancer incidence rates in the world at 47.5 per 100,000 each year. It is frequently undiagnosed until it has reached stage 4, the advanced stage of the disease. But Richmond is hopeful that the Transforming Community Health Project will lead to a positive impact and improved health for women living in northern Uganda.

The program also developed and implemented a model to train nurses from health centres in the surrounding districts to teach nurses and midwives how to screen for cervical and breast cancer. In November, 30 nurses from five health centres trained at Gulu University in the theory of cervical and breast screening, followed by hands-on screening practised at health clinics.

“Every month the nurses from the Ugandan Women’s Health Institute, established by President and Vice-Chancellor Professor Ian Jacobs in 2005, are continuing to educate nurses working in northern Uganda, including providing continuous support and ongoing quality training,” Richmond says.

Richmond will return to Gulu in 2018 with a UNSW team to focus on the second phase of the project – screening children to determine their ear, eye and oral health and other childhood diseases.

“There are no statistics on the health of children nor programmes that exist for children’s health in northern Uganda. Our first step is to find out the diseases existing in children. Because if you don’t know how bad the problem is, you can’t do anything to ameliorate it,” she says.

Donations to the Uganda Transforming Community Health Project can be made online at donate.unsw.edu.au/donate/form/donate_uguns.html

Please specify the Uganda Health Project in the donation form.
I n the late 1980s, our friends living on Sydney’s Palm Beach in the old Beacon Tea Rooms had no flushing toilet. One of them, a judge’s son and architect, used a galvanised bucket. The other, a Czech emigre, used the public toilet block across the road.

This toilet block, like so many others, was not responding to its breathtaking location. Instead it was a sturdy brick bunker. There is a term in the Australian vernacular that refers to these structures: “built like a brick outhouse”. I’ve paraphrased slightly.

WHAT DOES THIS SAY ABOUT US?

T he public toilet is where we come to take a very private and basic human need. These facilities set the tone for public conduct and expectations. They are a built expression of our values. So what is the preoccupation with the bomb-proofing of this kind of vital public infrastructure? Is it expressing a perception of our fellow citizens and their expected behaviour? How do people respond in these places to the need for privacy, comfort, a place to compose oneself, to refresh and groom? Warren Buffett said if you want to ensure the success of your brand you need to truly understand how people respond in these spaces. How do things that we carry with us when we move through the city as an able-bodied, middle-aged male, the toilets that I use are neither delightful nor enchanting. At best they work and are bearable. They make me feel like I’m being begrudgingly accommodated.

Interestingly, public toilets are not unisex, like those we use at home or on aircraft. Does this contribute to making them places for illicit activities, and lend them a seedy feel? Public toilets are also one of the most incendiary battlegrounds in the transgender community’s ongoing fight for civil rights, as these spaces have been for women, African-Americans and the disabled community. Social attitudes are literally imbricated in these structures, which are slow to change with our zeitgeist.

INCONVENIENT PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

E ven when we finally find one that is open – not an easy task at times – we generally find a space that is hardly the result of a masterclass in excellent design. Thankfully, there are some notable exceptions. Usually we find ourselves in one of the most economical layouts possible, trimmed down to its absolute bare minimum – and, if lucky, with ventilation and light both working.

Universal toilets introduced at least an element of spaciousness. Thanks to wheelchair users, you no longer need to hold your breath in a claustrophobically small space.

However, there is often no provision for the things that we carry with us when we move through the city. If there is a hook on the back of the door, it’s often broken. Putting a bag on a public toilet floor or a wet sink surround does not appeal. And how much harder it must be to use a public toilet while looking after children!

When and how exactly did we decide that these conveniences have to be so inconvenient?

IT DOESN’T HAVE TO BE THIS WAY

S ingapore Airport shows what can be done. It has large spacious toilets, which are wonderful – they even have multiple hooks. A wheelchair case can effortlessly be brought into the cubicle.

These toilets are quiet, clean and smell good. These toilets communicate to me that my needs are understood.

They provide a place where I can feel dignified. They set the tone for public conduct.

Toilets like this say ‘we respect and we appreciate you and we offer you this to make you feel better’. As a result, I conduct myself accordingly and not begrudgingly.

I leave delighted and deeply impressed by Singapore’s attitude towards its guests. Wouldn’t it be nice if that was the feeling we could all have when leaving public toilets?

Christian Tietz is a Senior Lecturer in Industrial Design at UNSW Built Environment. This is an edited version of an article originally published on The Conversation, theconversation.com.

A vision splendid

From growing up in a Malaysian village with no electricity to becoming one of Australia’s wealthiest people, Maha Sinnathamby learned the art of survival while studying at UNSW.

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Books

Populism Now! The Case for Progressive Populism
David McNic和平, NewSouth Books
- This provocative book is the first detailed account of the military engagements between Europeans and Aboriginal Australians that occurred across the Sydney region from 1788 to the last recorded conflict in the area in 1817. Historian Stephen Gapps sheds new light on how British and Aboriginal forces developed military tactics and how the violence played out.

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Half the Sky
Luise Guest, NewSouth Books
- The dynamic artistic centres of China are producing some of the most interesting and compelling contemporary art of our time. But where are the stories of women artists? Luise Guest, Director of the White Rabbit Gallery – home to one of the world's great collections of contemporary Chinese art – profiles 32 women artists working in China today. As Chairman Mao said, "Women hold up half the sky".

Intelligence and the Function of Government
Daniel Baldwin and Rhys Craven, Melbourne University Publishing
- Intelligence plays an important but often hidden role in the everyday function of government. This book draws on a range of experts, including academics, former and current strategic advisers and members of government, private industry professionals and intelligence community experts to explain, access and expose the central foundations and frameworks necessary for effective practice of intelligence in Australia. Co-author Rhys Craven is an adjunct lecturer at UNSW Canberra.

Books

The Sydney Wars
Stephen Gapps, NewSouth Books
- This provocative book is the first detailed account of the military engagements between Europeans and Aboriginal Australians that occurred across the Sydney region from 1788 to the last recorded conflict in the area in 1817. Historian Stephen Gapps sheds new light on how British and Aboriginal forces developed military tactics and how the violence played out.

In memoriam

New directors appointed for UNSW Press

Two new directors were appointed to the board of the award-winning UNSW Press in February. George Williams AO, pictured, is the Dean, the Anthony Mason Professor, and a Scientia Professor at UNSW Law. He has written and edited 35 books, including eight books published by UNSW Press, most recently A Charter of Rights for Australia. A well-known media commentator on legal issues, he is currently a columnist for The Australian, and reviews science-fiction and fantasy books for The Weekend Australian and the ABC.

Fiona Inglis, pictured, is the Managing Director of Curtis Brown Australia Pty Ltd, a leading Australian literary agency that represents authors of fiction and non-fiction across all genres. As a literary agent, she manages the works of best-selling authors such as Liane Moriarty, Andy Griffiths and Tom Keneally. Before this role, she had sales and editorial positions with HarperCollins and Allen & Unwin. UNSW Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic Professor Merlin Crossley became Chairman in January 2016, following the retirement of Peter Eichhorn on 31 December 2017. UNSW Chief Financial Officer Stephen Rees also sits on the Board.

Established by the Council of UNSW in 1962, UNSW Press is now one of the oldest Australian-owned book publishers.

Kathy Baill, chief executive of UNSW Press, said: “The vast experience of these new directors and their obvious passion for books and reading will strengthen the UNSW Press Board as we embark on some innovative projects in 2018.

“Significant development of the UNSW Bookshop on the Kensington campus in Sydney is underway and we will continue to invest in our high-quality list of general non-fiction and academic books by Australia’s top authors.”

In memoriam

Professor Stuart Wenham
Pioneering researcher, inventor of solar cell technologies and director of UNSW’s Photovoltaics Centre of Excellence, died on 23 December 2017.

Dr Michael Crouch AC
Distinguished Australian business leader and philanthropist who established the Michael Crouch Innovation Centre at UNSW, died on 9 February 2018.

Emeritus Professor Garth Nettheim AO
Indigenous law advocate, social justice champion and former Dean of Law at UNSW, died on 11 February 2018.

Scientia Professor David Cooper AO
Leader in the global fight against HIV and inaugural Director of UNSW’s Kirby Institute, died on 18 March 2018.
The word ‘khalas’ in Arabic has myriad definitions, including ‘stop’, ‘finish’, ‘that’s all’, ‘it’s fine’ and ‘enough!’ Many Australian Muslims have had enough. And they have decided they are enough. Khalas. This powerful exhibition explores the contemporary Australian Muslim experience, from the daily media beat-ups to outright racist leadership taunts directed at Muslims. Curated by Associate Professor Phillip George, UNSW Art & Design, and Nur Shkembi, the diverse works speak with candour to the often cited but rarely interrogated social condition of Australian Muslims today.

This exhibition has been supported by the Australia Council for the Arts.