

# STATE OF DENIAL

Why is pseudo-science hijacking the climate change debate?

Vietnam –  
**honouring  
the enemy**

**Evolution rocks** –  
How music is linked  
to mating behaviour

**Sleeping Beauty**  
– an erotic  
fairytale

**Kerry O'Brien**  
on the race  
to the bottom

Changing  
the business  
of **not-for-profits**

# uniken WINTER 2011

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Cover: Getty Images

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# OBJECTIVELY SPEAKING... 33

How this object inspires me.



Photo: Grant Turner, Mediakoo

## Powerful connections

**Two years ago computer scientist Vijay Sivaraman didn't own a smartphone and wasn't much interested in them. His attitude changed when he saw them as connected components of a big, computer network.**

Sivaraman, a senior lecturer in the School of Electrical Engineering and Telecommunications, is developing systems that will allow smartphones to act as processors in a distributed network that gathers detailed information on personal health and environmental conditions.

"Mobile phones now have more processing power than desktop computers did just three or four years ago," Sivaraman says.

"There is massive growth in subscriber numbers, particularly in developing countries, and this is a new way to deliver services without massive infrastructure costs."

Originally from New Delhi, where "one day breathing the air is like smoking 42 cigarettes", Sivaraman developed a personal interest in health issues when his non-smoker father developed lung problems as a result of living in the Indian capital's polluted atmosphere.

Sivaraman worked for the CSIRO and the renowned Bell Laboratories before coming to UNSW and has a background in computer networks and high-capacity routers. His "Eureka moment" for the potential of mobile phones came at a conference in India in 2009, when a speaker detailed the rapid uptake of handsets in developing countries. With "mind-blowing" numbers of 20 million new subscribers a month in India alone, Sivaraman realised that smartphones were taking computer power into areas which would never otherwise have access to the internet, and where households were unlikely to ever have a computer.

He now has two smartphones – one iPhone, one Android – and is investigating how to make them do more as part of his Haze Watch research project.

Sivaraman is leading work to create a network that gathers air-quality information via portable pollution detectors linked wirelessly to smartphones. The phones upload pollution data, which is then mapped on a web interface, allowing users to view real-time, air-quality data and check their exposure. The project is still in its early days, but with a more refined air-monitoring and recording system, has the potential to make a major contribution to improving general health, Sivaraman believes.

"What the mobile phone lacks is lots of sensors: it has a microphone and a camera and GPS but if you connect more sensors you can use that processing power. It could be a sensor worn on your body that monitors vital signs or an electrochemical sensor that tells you how much pollution you've been exposed to each day," he says.

**By Peter Trute.**

**To nominate for "Objectively speaking ..." please email uniken@unsw.edu.au**

# evolution rocks

Male mating behaviour hit a high note when music began to loosen libidos. Yasmin Ghahremani reports on evolutionary biologist Rob Brooks' new work in the area.

Elvis's pelvis and Jagger's swagger are legendary for their ability to elicit dreams, screams and underwear from female fans. But even less glamorous back-up men like Keith Richards thrilled the pants off groupies for decades. According to evolutionary biologist Rob Brooks, when rock music arrived, it allowed young people to express their sexuality and aggression more freely than previous music had – and it's largely men who exploited this. In fact, he claims rock is a cultural extension of biological male mating behaviour.

"Music stimulates parts of our brains that first evolved for other purposes ... It is especially important in courtship, and in learning to navigate the social transition to adulthood. It may be the most complex and sophisticated courtship display in the animal kingdom," he asserts.

"Music in the '50s and '60s became about men making music for women and also to assert their dominance over other men," says Brooks, who is director of the Evolution and Ecology Research Centre at UNSW.

That is a central tenet of his book, *Sex, Genes & Rock 'n' Roll*. The book provides an overview of how evolution interacts with social, cultural and economic phenomena, providing explanations for all kinds of behaviour, from excessive weight gain to polygamy and even death. Brooks draws on his own theories about the conflicting evolutionary interests of males and females, as well as his group's research

into how sex shapes the behaviour and life history of organisms such as crickets.

"What I'm hoping to do is broaden the range of things that people know about evolution beyond survival of the fittest and the selfish gene," says Brooks.

He chose rock music because he says it was the most important and egalitarian artistic development of the 20th century.

"... an evolutionary biologist starts from the assumption that things don't happen by themselves, especially things that dramatically increase your risk of dying, as rocking out certainly does. Anything as

popular, exciting, sexy, deadly and – most of all – as difficult to do well, needs an explanation," he says.

To explain the rock theory, Brooks describes the male reproductive agenda. Males and females are driven to pass on their genes, often by mating with more than one partner. However, men can impregnate many women in the nine months it takes a woman to bear a child. Men thus have more evolutionary incentive – and

opportunities – to seek out multiple partners. And while actors, businessmen and sports stars have used their

wealth and status to make sexual conquests, Brooks argues that rock stars have out-performed them all. Brooks believes rock music developed to help men and women seduce mates, but men hijacked it. Artists like Janis Joplin and Deborah Harry are the exception to the rule. Women today produce hits, but they tend to be pop or dance tunes. "That's because the aesthetic boundaries of rock were defined by an inherently male, blokey agenda," says Brooks.

There is a cost for rock stars, though. A study by the Liverpool John Moores University found that between 3 and 25 years after becoming famous, performers of the all-time Top 1,000 pop and rock albums were more than 1.7

times as likely to die as North Americans or Europeans of the same age.

Brooks cites the example of Rolling

Stones drummer

Brian Jones, who drowned at 27, yet still managed to father four children, each by a different mother.

That's not surprising to Brooks. He says "live fast, die young" is the mantra for males across many species. "When the chance emerges to become one of the very, very best you'll make a deal with the devil, whether that means that you discount the future by doing heroin or carrying guns around, sooner or later a lot of those men are just going to fall off the perch."

*Sex, Genes & Rock 'n' Roll: How Evolution has Shaped the Modern World*, is published by NewSouth Books.



The power of music ... The Rolling Stones' Mick Jagger

Photo: Jon Reid

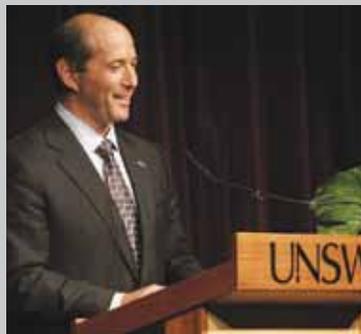


## THE NEXT STEP

Nura Gili Indigenous Programs' new director, Professor **Martin Nakata**, is committed to boosting the number of Indigenous students at UNSW to 500 by 2015. Increasing individual learning support will ensure UNSW produces quality graduates, he says. "The lessons we learn from this next phase will provide evidence for future governments that we can close the gap in education."

### WORLD PREMIERE

At the peak of apartheid's violence in 1985, a black policeman was burnt to death and 25 people convicted of his murder; 14 were sentenced to hang. A documentary about the trial and its aftermath, featuring Law's Associate Professor **Andrea Durbach** (pictured below), will premiere this month at the **Sydney Film Festival**. It's one of two films in the festival involving UNSW academics: the other is *Scenario*, a world-first film experience using 3D technology and artificial intelligence, developed at the iCinema and directed by Professor **Dennis Del Favero**.



### LAW'S MILESTONE

US Ambassador **Jeffrey Bleich** (pictured above) delivers the Australian Human Rights Centre's annual lecture, one of UNSW Law's flagship events celebrating its 40th anniversary. When the Faculty opened in 1961, Foundation Dean Hal Wootten's vision was for a place of learning where "students mattered". Today, the Law School is one of the most highly regarded. For a full rundown of the year's celebrations go to the website – [www.law.unsw.edu.au](http://www.law.unsw.edu.au)

Four UNSW industrial designers are among the finalists of Australia's top student design competition, the **James Dyson Award**, with clever designs to improve eyecare, surf safety and emergency response. Winners will be announced **22 July**.



### TRADITIONAL MAGIC

New pharmaceuticals based on traditional Cook Island plant remedies could be on sale within two years, with the Indigenous community to profit from the commercialisation led by NSI and biotech company CIMTECH. PhD candidate **Graham Matheson**, a doctor who grew up in the Islands, gained permission from tribal chiefs to conduct the research. His work with Professor **Bill Walsh**, who heads POW's Surgical and Orthopaedic Research Laboratories, shows the extracts can promote new bone formation within a week, and improve wound healing and skin repair.

### MINING'S HIGH-TECH FUTURE

UNSW's new Australian Centre for Sustainable Mining Practices will use technologies such as 3D simulation to assist the long-term viability of the mining industry. Centre director and holder of the Mitsubishi Chair in Sustainable Mining Practices, Associate Professor **David Laurence**, says mining sustainability is about reducing environmental impacts but also using ore reserves efficiently, maximising economic viability and increasing safety.

*"We've been talking about a 'clever country' for too long ... it's time we became a card carrying member of the global R&D club."*

Professors Fred Hilmer and Les Field argue for an overhaul of public research funding in the *AFR*.

### → AROUND THE TRAPS

Professor **Catharine Lumby** and Associate Professor **Kate Crawford** from the Journalism and Media Research Centre launch a report, *The Adaptive Moment: a Fresh Approach to Convergent Media in Australia*, recommending an overhaul of content regulations. COFA's Professor **Richard Goodwin** adds the prestigious Wynn Prize to his list of achievements, winning for his sculpture, *Co-isolated slave*, a vertically positioned motorcycle. UNSW academics and writers take part in the **Sydney Writers' Festival** including Associate Professors **Gerhard Fischer**, **Sarah Maddison** and Professor **Ronan McDonald**, and authors from UNSW Press. Lord Mayor **Clover Moore** has announced an agreement between **FBE** and the City of Sydney on key urban issues. PhD students **Wee Siang Teo** and **Jan Galton** join 25 Nobel Laureates and 550 of the world's best young medical minds for the annual Nobel Laureate meeting in Germany.

### → WATCH THIS SPACE

Renowned philosopher and ethicist Professor **Peter Singer** to speak about the values that shape the choices we make in creating our built environment in FBE's Utzon Lecture on **13 July**. The 13th **Australian Social Policy Conference** hosted by the Social Policy Research Centre (**6-8 July**) "Social Policy in a Complex World". Held every two years, the conference is a key agenda setter. The 60th anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention (**14-17 June**), marked at UNSW with an international conference hosted by the **Centre for Refugee Research**. British composer **Michael Nyman's** latest project – video installations – is shown at Sydney Park Brickworks. The exhibition, "Cine Opera", is curated by COFA's **Felicity Fenner** and runs until **13 June**.

# criminal MINDS



Photo: Jon Feid

**She might not match the TV stereotype, but criminologist Julie Stubbs is the real deal, Steve Offner discovers.**

**In April, 23-year-old** Natasha Epshtein was jailed for 13 years for murdering her drug dealer by stabbing him more than 40 times. A shocked Victorian Supreme Court Justice Betty King noted: “Violence by women, and young women in particular, is definitely on the increase.”

The observation is supported by crime statistics, which show women are committing more violent crime and are being jailed at a greater rate.

But Professor Julie Stubbs, arguably Australia’s leading criminologist and expert in gendered violence, is not convinced.

“If we look at the raw numbers then it is true women’s imprisonment rates have been rising more rapidly than those for men,” she says. “But I think we

shouldn’t take that at face value. In the past 15 years more resources have been directed towards policing certain areas – especially drugs – and as more things have been criminalised more women and girls have been caught up. So it’s hard to say if there are real changes in behaviour or just in criminal justice practices.”

While the numbers tell their own story, Stubbs – who is involved in an international study looking at women who kill – believes there’s an enduring fascination with women who commit violent crimes that far outweighs their incidence or significance.

“Women who commit violent crime are seen to offend in two ways: against the law and against gender stereotypes,” Stubbs says.

“That means they are doubly offensive, doubly remarkable; and

unfortunately that’s what gives their actions such news value.”

Stubbs’ views are sought across a range of government and justice agencies, yet colleague Professor Eileen Baldry, from the Faculty of Social Sciences, says Stubbs is not one to seek the limelight.

“But that makes her all the more effective and all the more trustworthy when she does speak out,” Baldry says.

Stubbs’ measured persona is at odds with the TV stereotype of the criminologist in the lab coat, who uses forensic and medical sciences to nab the crim.

“When I’m talking to potential students I have to hose that down and let them know that we won’t be doing autopsies and there’s no laboratory work,” she laughs.

Stubbs believes her interest in social justice stems from childhood. “I grew up in Wollongong in public housing, I went to the local high school, and I was very aware of social inequality.”

As a 21-year-old psychology graduate, Stubbs answered an ad to fill a short-term vacancy in the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research. She ended up staying nine years.

“I learned an enormous amount about how the criminal justice system works, court processes, police practices, as well as the statistics that are generated.”

While the police collaborations were eye opening, Stubbs says her most vivid memories are of her research into domestic violence, which involved interviewing victims following their court cases.

She recalls one woman whose husband climbed into his estranged wife’s house with a baseball bat to break her jaw, despite orders for him to stay away.

“We came out of court and found he’d parked his car next to hers. When we went to a café ... he followed us and again parked his car next to hers. I got a real sense of the palpable fear ... and how his mere presence symbolised to her that she was at risk,” Stubbs says.

Her move into academia was “almost accidental”. Offered a two-year teaching post at the University of Sydney, Stubbs enjoyed it so much she stayed and eventually became director of the University’s Institute of Criminology, before moving to UNSW last year.

Stubbs believes recruiting non-lawyers into legal faculties is a great advantage.

“UNSW now has several criminologists in the law faculty – in other institutions they would be solely in the Arts and Social Sciences. But criminology students need legal training and lawyers often don’t have the necessary social science-based research skills ... so it’s a fabulous mix.”



# honouring THE enemy

**Historian Bob Hall has turned a tour of duty in Vietnam into a life's work. As Susi Hamilton reports, his team has identified the burial sites of thousands of Viet Cong missing in action.**

**There's an old backpack** that hasn't been used in more than 40 years in Bob Hall's garage. While it is tattered and has a few holes, he still can't bring himself to throw it out.

"I used that during my time in the Vietnam War," he recalls. "I carried all my worldly goods in it. Occasionally I stand at the door of my garage wondering whether I should put in on the trailer to take to the tip, but I just haven't been able to."

An infantry platoon commander in the conflict from 1969 to 1970, Dr Hall knows more than most how tempting it can be to keep souvenirs used or found during a tour of duty and the ethical dilemmas of what to do with them decades later.

The war got under his skin. Now a military historian at UNSW@ADFA, he has turned his personal interest into the most comprehensive assessment of Australia's involvement in Vietnam.

His work ranges from the very personal – about the souvenirs of the war dead and locating where their bodies are buried – to the very strategic – an assessment of the combat performance of the Australian Task Force.

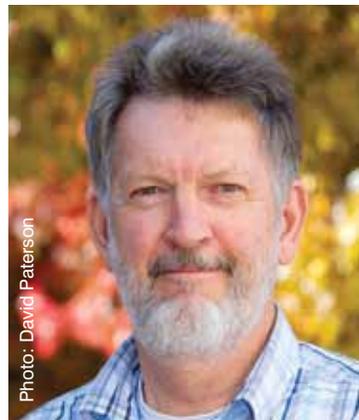


Photo: David Paterson

**"If we can let family know where the remains of soldiers are buried, they can carry out important funeral rituals."**

"War is a very emotional experience for soldiers. They like to keep mementos of that time. Some of them might have taken photos or papers from enemy bodies," he says. "Soldiers are now getting old and many are now thinking they would like to return them to family members in Vietnam."

One offshoot of Dr Hall's research with colleagues Dr Andrew Ross, Dr Amy Griffin and Mr Derrill de Heer has been to set up a website for Vietnam veterans from Australia and New Zealand to list personal artefacts taken from Vietnam.

"We have had a number of positive responses, including commendation certificates and photographs," he says, adding that veterans often feel more comfortable talking to him as another returned soldier. Ultimately, the hope is to return the items to surviving family members in Vietnam, in what could be a welcome surprise for them and perhaps a relief for those who took them all those years ago.

It is also hoped that any personal effects might help identify individual soldiers and locate burial sites of the Vietnamese war dead – one of the team's wider research aims.

The team's work focuses on Phuoc Tuy Province (now known as Ba Ria-Vung Tau Province, south-east of Ho Chi Minh City), an area where Australians and New Zealanders saw most of their action, in low-intensity conflicts. There were around 3,900 skirmishes during the five years



**Mementos of MIAs ... (clockwise from above) A photograph of a medical corps sergeant in the People's Army kept by a New Zealander who wants it returned to the family; a map of Vietnam showing where Australians saw most of their conflict; and a certificate of a member of the Viet Cong.**

troops were there and enemy dead were buried at the site without identification.

The team has used the tens of thousands of pieces of information now stored at the Australian War Memorial, such as the date, time and place of contact, the enemy strength and number of shots fired, to create a database and a map with the locations of the skirmishes.

With that level of detail, the researchers realised they could locate every battle where Australians or New Zealanders killed an enemy soldier – helping to end the mystery of some of the 300,000 Vietnamese still “missing in action” (MIA).

To illustrate the scope of the work, Dr Hall hovers over a Google Earth map of the province with thousands of red dots. Each dot represents a battle that took place and as the cursor rests on it, each brings up all the available information about the skirmish – sometimes up to 30 facts.

“If we know where the remains of soldiers are buried and can let family members know, they can carry out funeral rituals, which are very important in the Vietnamese culture,” says Dr Hall. This Australian work

on identifying the dead has been reciprocated by the Vietnamese government, which located and repatriated the remains of six Australian MIAs – 521 Australians in total died in the war.

The database is already being put to good use.

“Land use has changed dramatically in the province,” he says. “A lot of the burial sites are now under residential developments. This way, if bones are found during excavation, they can consult the database and find out whether the bones were as a result of an Australian battle.”

The research also has implications for future combat, helping to focus attention on how important frequent, low-intensity combats are in warfare.

“We recognise there is a need to get beyond the ‘big battle’ approach,” says Dr Hall. “Most Australian historiography of the war tends to focus on the big battles – Long Tan, Coral, Balmoral and so on – but there were relatively few of those. What were Australians doing the rest of the time? We decided to focus on the big battles as well as the small skirmishes, even the ones that seemed inconclusive.”

One of the key findings is that the Australians were in fact far better at guerilla warfare than the Vietnamese.

“There was a myth that developed around the Viet Cong – that they were running rings around the Australians,” says Dr Hall. “In fact, apart from landmines, we can show conclusively that our troops dominated any encounters. Australian and New Zealanders opened fire first in 85 per cent of cases. That’s pretty remarkable given that we were operating in their backyard.

“Given that counter-insurgency is a form of warfare that is becoming more common, our research can tell commanders how to construct operations – so that you achieve more ambushes of the enemy than he does of you. It can be advantageous to future commanders to know this.”

The final part of the research focuses on the connections between combat operations and thousands of military offences; ranging from the trivial, such as failing to get a haircut; to the serious, such as the accidental discharge of a rifle and even the most extreme; murder.

“When there were high casualties, perhaps as a result of an exploded landmine, in which say, 15 people could be killed or injured, that could lead to a peak in offences,” says Dr Hall. “We have found that there is a direct correlation between high combat casualties and the commission of offences, so we think we can now start to quantify how intense combat can affect morale and discipline.”

Dr Hall admits studying war and what happened in Vietnam has been his life’s work. He believes most veterans share the same experience.

“When you’re in the army and you’re involved in a major part of history, one feels compelled to search more comprehensively,” he says. “I’ve been able to do it through my work, but others do it more vicariously, through reading.

“I now realise how inadequately prepared I was as a soldier. I think I did a competent job, but knowing then what I know now, I would have made a much better platoon commander. But of course you need a young man to do these jobs. It’s an older man who can reflect, having lived a while.

“I’m hoping that our work can better prepare the young men and women Australia will send into future combat and peace keeping operations.”

*For the full interview with Dr Hall, go to the audio podcasts section of UNSW TV at [www.tv.unsw.edu.au](http://www.tv.unsw.edu.au)*

*More information about the project is at [www.vvaansw.org/VMIA.html](http://www.vvaansw.org/VMIA.html)*





Professor Andy Pitman ...  
the subject of vitriol

“The probability of climate science being wrong is roughly equivalent to evolution being wrong.”

one of the sharpest policy minds Australia has produced in modern times. Media reports suggest Garnaut’s office has been targeted for abusive phone calls and mail, and that extra security has been needed as a result of death threats.

When Garnaut recently stated that “the overwhelming weight of scientific evidence is telling us climate change is happening”, Radio 2GB’s top-rating Alan Jones responded by dismissing him as a “galoot”. Jones added: “Well of course it’s happening, ha, ha, course climate change is happening ya dunce, but is it being created by man-made carbon dioxide emissions? They don’t want to face that question.”

Jones’s assertion, of course, is nonsense. For practising climate scientists, that question was faced and resolved in the affirmative long ago: not for ironclad certain – scientific findings are always open to some degree of revision in light of new information – but beyond reasonable doubt. Not a single national or international scientific organisation of any standing disputes the planet has been warming at an unusually fast rate over the past century and that most of the warming observed since about 1950 is a result of human activity. Despite

all the noise and doubt generated by sceptics, there’s no credible alternative scientific explanation. Likewise, projections for coming decades suggest strongly that dangerous and disruptive warming is going to happen unless we all change the way we live.

**S**o how did it come to this? Certainly the science of climate change is “an inconvenient truth” for some powerful vested interests and, indeed, for all of us, so it’s no surprise that pot shots are being taken at the messenger.

Professor Naomi Oreskes, who spoke at UNSW earlier this year, has detailed in her book, *Merchants of Doubt*, how some of those firing the shots are politically exploiting normal scientific uncertainty. Intriguingly, they are the same people and groups – notably a Washington-based think-tank, the George C. Marshall Institute – that have waged similar doubt and disbelief campaigns in the past about the risks of tobacco smoking, acid rain, the Antarctic ozone hole and use of the pesticide DDT.

Politics is politics, but why have so many ordinary people rejected the science and chosen

instead a “comforting lie” – that the research is wrong and we can carry on as usual?

The science, of course, is highly unlikely to be wrong. Indeed, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s (IPCC) conclusions and predictions are the result of arguably the most thorough and exhaustive peer-review processes yet undertaken. They comprehensively explain the observed facts and the multiple lines of evidence and are based on long-established principles of physics.

If anything, the IPCC is open to criticism that it has been too conservative in its predictions.

In the lead-up to the 2009 Copenhagen summit, for example, academics from the UNSW Climate Change Research Centre coordinated the “Copenhagen Diagnosis” project – a global update by 26 prominent researchers of the latest climate science published since the 2007 IPCC report. They concluded that several important aspects of climate change were already occurring at the high end, or even beyond, the expectations of just a few years earlier: global ice sheets were melting faster and Arctic sea ice was thinning and melting much faster than projected, and future sea-level rise was now

expected to be much higher than previously forecast.

That trend continues, yet we now face the conundrum that public opposition and disbelief have grown and hardened even as the science has become more certain.

This is not a phenomenon faced only by climate science. Researchers in other fields notice an upsurge in hostility to science, its methods and its practitioners. Environmental scientist Professor Richard Kingsford, for example, says the spill-over from climate scepticism is plainly having an impact in the public debate he’s involved in – the sustainable management of water resources.

“Irrigators are challenging the science behind the Murray–Darling Basin Plan,” says Kingsford, who heads UNSW’s Australian Wetlands and Rivers Centre. “As with climate science, they’re questioning the models on which the plan is based. I also get angry phone calls from people telling me I need to get out from behind my desk and ‘go out and see a real river’.” In fact Kingsford has personally studied countless rivers and flown annual aerial surveys of most of Australia’s major wetlands for more than 25 consecutive years.



Photo: Gabrielle Dunlevy, AAP

“... the evidence for the effectiveness of (science) communication is about as strong as the evidence linking rainmaking ceremonies to the occurrence of rain.”

**Fury at the science ... burning the Murray–Darling Basin Authority plan in Griffith, southern NSW (October 2010)**

Science is under assault on multiple fronts. Creationism still actively contests the science of evolution (between 1985 and 2005, the number of US citizens who accepted the concept of evolution declined from 45 per cent to 40 per cent); Scientologists have been joined by new forces challenging some of the foundations of neuroscience and psychiatry; alternative medicines and practitioners flourish, often without a skerrick of genuine evidence; anti-vaccination groups confront and reject immunological science; various lobby groups fulminate against the genetic modification of foods and microbes; and fears about nanotechnology even drew Prince Charles into the fray, citing the potential for horrors like thalidomide.

Certainly some sections of the media have shown little interest in impartiality or objectivity on climate issues. The ABC’s efforts to achieve “balance” inadvertently led to a distortion in many individual reports, with sceptics given equal time to espouse discredited theories. A recent change in ABC policy may improve things, with balance being pursued in a broader overall context.

Others have been ham-fisted. Channel Seven’s *Sunrise* program recently pitted Nick Rowley, a former UK government climate policy advisor, against New Zealander Ken Ring to comment on the relationship between climate change and the major Queensland floods. Ring not only denies any human role in climate change but purports to use astrology to predict weather and earthquakes. In former times he was a clown, magician and author of the book *Pawmistry: How To Read Your Cat’s Paws*.

As Pitman told ABC’s *Media Watch* program, taking part in such debates is “like asking a cardiologist to respond to the well-known theory that humans do not have a heart and cardiologists only claim we have a heart so they can make lots of money claiming to operate on them. This is so utterly without foundation that it is actually hard to say anything but ‘that is stupid.’”

Media historians no doubt will also single out the stance taken by the national broadsheet, *The Australian*. It has given space in its opinion pages to climate science dissenters at a level well out of proportion to their significance in debate among scientists generally. A recent peer-reviewed study

of publication and citation data for 1,372 actively publishing, climate researchers found 97 per cent endorsed the position set out by the IPCC. *The Australian’s* news coverage has also played down or overlooked important developments in climate science while giving great emphasis to side issues, such as the so-called Climategate affair, of little consequence to the core science.

Climategate revolved around leaked email records in November 2009 of British climate researchers at the University of East Anglia. Sceptic blogs made alarming claims of conspiracy and corruption of scientific process and data, but several inquiries have exposed at worst nothing more than “some minor grubbiness and obstructiveness about sharing raw data”, notes UNSW philosopher and mathematician Professor Jim Franklin.

Opinion polling in America showed people becoming less sure that climate scientists believed in global warming after 2006, a phenomenon also seen in Britain and Europe. The reasons for this recent trend are complex. But it is likely the false dichotomy created by the exposure given to the pseudo-science of climate “sceptics” has been a significant factor.

Perhaps the nature of public debate has been changed fundamentally by the internet. Thanks to countless blogs and media sites offering readers the chance to comment – often anonymously – everyone now gets to have a say, even if much of it is what was once regarded as no better than prejudiced or ill-informed bar talk.

Some observers even question whether this biased input is carefully orchestrated. Web commentator Craig Cormick warns that the internet – one of the most democratic media tools – can be hijacked to “distort, misinform and distribute propaganda”, on public policy issues such as climate change and the mining tax.

He points to the rise of “sock puppetry” (also known as astroturfing) – the creation of an online identity for purposes of deception and to create the sense of a “grassroots” movement.

“By creating multiple (online) personas, individuals are able to have a disproportionate influence over discussions,” says Cormick who is Online Communications Director for the Department of Health and Ageing.

He says the ease with which domain names can be registered and websites built means hundreds – if not thousands – of email addresses and personas can be created.

“These sock puppets can even become well-defined personalities, expressing a particular set of views across a set of topics, interacting with both real people and other sock puppets to coordinate and amplify particular views through Twitter, Facebook, blogs, forums and newspaper comment columns,” he says.

Perhaps we all simply need time to readjust and refine our personal and collective opinion filters in light of these new realities, to do the job that professional news organisations do by winnowing out the chaff and giving emphasis to particular stories and authoritative voices.

But the traffic hasn't been all one way. Witness the recent conversion of Dr Bjorn Lomborg, the Danish political scientist and author of the bestseller *The Skeptical Environmentalist*. For a decade, Lomborg was scorned by many scientists and feted by many sceptics for his steadfast opposition – mainly on cost–benefit grounds – to the Kyoto Protocol and other efforts to reduce carbon emissions. He radically changed his tune last year when the sums were done afresh. As Lomborg told a recent Melbourne conference, “global warming's real, it's man-made, it is an important problem, it is something we need to fix. So let's get the whole denialist argument to rest.” Columnists once happy to quote from Lomborg have been silent on his about-face.

As well, many scientists and scientific bodies have taken the offensive and developed websites or downloadable documents that speak directly to general readers. Some have a straight factual approach, such as those developed by the CSIRO and the Australian Academy of Science. Others, such as the lively and popular Deltoid blog run by UNSW computer

science lecturer Tim Lambert, are feisty participants in the cut and thrust.

Prominent sceptics have also come under closer scrutiny. Archbishop of Sydney Cardinal George Pell, for example, laments that the climate debate lacks scientific rigour and authority, yet he has wrongly asserted that nitrogen is a greenhouse gas. Australian Bureau of Meteorology director, Dr Greg Ayers, says the Cardinal's view that there are “good reasons for doubting that carbon dioxide causes warmer temperatures” was a plain contradiction of the core physics.

Ayers says Pell appeared to have been misled by reading the bestseller *Heaven + Earth: The missing science of climate change*, by Australia's most prominent sceptical scientist, geologist Professor Ian Plimer. While Plimer achieved considerable commercial success and notoriety with the book, it was ferociously panned by many scientists as error-ridden polemic. In one such review, UNSW astrophysicist Professor Michael Ashley said: “It is not ‘merely’ atmospheric scientists that would have to be wrong for Plimer to be right. It would require a rewriting of biology, geology, physics, oceanography, astronomy and statistics.”

While scientists have been accused of being on a funding gravy-train, independent journalist Graham Readfearn has also turned the spotlight on Plimer's growing personal wealth – about \$920,000 in the past two years alone, he asserts – from fees and share sales related to his “role as a director and chairman with several mining companies, an occupation which he has recently expanded. These same energy-intensive operations are those which would be hardest hit under any plans to price carbon.”

But these are skirmishes on the flanks of the core puzzle about why public doubts about climate science have grown even as the evidence has piled higher.



## You've got to laugh ...

Rapping scientists? Comedies about climate change? In the bid to be heard above the noise, scientists and entertainers are combining forces to produce some rather adventurous communication promoting peer-reviewed climate science. UNSW climate scientists feature in a rap song called *I'm A Climate Scientist*. Produced for ABCTV's *Hungry Beast*, the video exploded on YouTube, lit up Twitter, resulted in a hit song on iTunes and even made the pages of *The Guardian* in the UK. Meanwhile, Australian comedian Greig Pickhaver (HG Nelson) fronts a satirical online show featuring radio and TV personality Amanda Keller and Chris Taylor from *The Chaser*. Called *The Steaming Toad* and produced by UNSWTV, it highlights some of the more ludicrous claims being made in the climate change debate. It's also building a Facebook and Twitter following. Find it at [www.youtube.com/steamingtoad](http://www.youtube.com/steamingtoad)

Is it mainly a question of how the science is being communicated? Most people don't take much interest in science, and science communication is itself based on very little science of its own: “When it comes to engaging students or the public in science, the approach has a scattergun texture: the unstated hope that some of the shot hits the right target,” notes Dr Carol Oliver, a science communication specialist with the Australian Centre for

Astrobiology at UNSW. As one textbook on the subject noted pithily, “... the evidence for the effectiveness of (science) communication is about as strong as the evidence linking rainmaking ceremonies to the occurrence of rain”.

Certainly many scientists are poor or reluctant public communicators. Yet science can be tough to communicate in plain English. “Numbers and units of measurement used to convey the statistics can also have a major

# "BALANCE" LEADS TO BIAS

People don't interpret and react to evidence solely on its quality, notes Associate Professor Ben Newell of UNSW's School of Psychology, who studies judgement and decision-making.

A tendency to be swayed by sampling biases, for example, can affect memory and judgement processes, says Newell. If we're exposed to opinions from climate change sceptics about 50 per cent of the time, we may conclude the science is only 50 per cent certain.

Several studies have found people's concerns and beliefs about global warming also vary according to the seasons or daily weather conditions, says Professor Matthew England, co-director of UNSW's Climate Change Research Centre. People feel more concerned on hot days and in summer, and less so on cold days and in winter.

One insight into the puzzle about the public conflict over the credibility of scientific data on environmental risks was given last year in a little-noticed paper in the leading science journal *Nature*<sup>1</sup> "Fixing the Communications Failure", by Dan M. Kahan of Yale University's Law School.

Kahan's group studies a psychological concept they call "cultural cognition", which is the influence of group values – relating to equality and authority, individualism and community – on risk perceptions and related beliefs. The findings strongly suggest your moral outlook – not your perceptions of risk or how well educated you are – best predict how you react to scientific data.

"People endorse whichever position reinforces their connection to others with whom they share important commitments," says Kahan. "As a result, public debate about science is strikingly polarised. The same groups who disagree on 'cultural issues' – abortion, same-sex marriage and school prayer – also disagree on whether climate change is real."

People tend to interpret new evidence according to these predispositions, he says: "As a result, groups with opposing values often become more polarised, not less, when exposed to scientifically sound information."

Kahan's team, for example, supplied a group of people with neutral, balanced information about nanotechnology: they immediately splintered into highly polarised factions consistent with their existing views on other environmental risks, such as nuclear power and genetically modified foods.

As a follow-up, they used fictional male experts, whose appearance (one in a suit and grey-haired, another denim-shirted and bearded) and publication titles were designed to make them look as if they had distinct cultural perspectives. The two experts gave arguments for and against mandatory cervical cancer vaccination.

When the expert in the suit argued against mandatory vaccination, people who shared his perceived values as an authority figure became even more intensely opposed to the idea. When the bearded expert defended the vaccine as safe, people with egalitarian values became more supportive of it.

Yet when the researchers swapped the expert-argument pairings, people shifted their positions and polarisation disappeared.

"Like fans at a sporting contest, people deal with evidence electively to promote their emotional interest in their group," says Kahan. "On issues ranging from climate change to gun control ... they take their cue about what they should feel, and hence believe, from the cheers and boos of the home crowd."

The best way forward for science and for society, then, may be for much greater effort to be put into communicating scientific evidence in ways that do not threaten cultural values. As Kahan says: "Unlike sports fans watching a game, citizens who hold opposing cultural outlooks are in fact rooting for the same outcome: the health, safety and economic well-being of their society."

<sup>1</sup> Vol. 463, pp. 296–297

George Pell laments the climate debate lacks scientific rigour yet has wrongly asserted that nitrogen is a greenhouse gas.



impact on interpretation of the severity of the problem," says UNSW psychological scientist, Associate Professor Ben Newell. "The amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere seems tiny when it is expressed as 0.0384 per cent by volume, or 390 parts per million – yet if it was collapsed into a single layer, it would be a substantial eight metres deep."

There's growing recognition, too, that communication needs to target specific audiences. Climate sceptics are not a homogeneous group – a few see the whole issue as part of a global conspiracy; others are outright denialists; many now accept the reality of global warming but not some particular aspect of the scientific explanation or the wisdom of cutting carbon dioxide emissions.

Politicians are in a bind because few of us grasp climate science well enough to evaluate

competing policy proposals.

As a recent paper in the journal *Nature Climate Change* noted: "Without basic scientific knowledge, lay people struggle to distinguish legitimate scepticism, which all sciences welcome, from radical scepticism, an unwillingness to accept any evidence that might disprove the claims in question."

Jim Franklin, author of *What Science Knows: and How It Knows It*, argues that science may not be as certain as it often likes to assert, and that some scientists can be their own worst enemies. Yet while science cannot offer the certainty many people would like on thorny challenges such as climate change, he says, "it can offer rationally grounded probabilities, which are the best available foundation for public policy". Short of sacrificing a goat, there's no real alternative. **U**



Photo: Getty Images

# THE TERRORIST AND THE LAW

**The man who helped orchestrate the Holocaust faced trial for crimes far graver than those of Osama bin Laden. Anthony Billingsley asks why the US has cast aside the rule of law.**

**The debate on the killing** of Osama bin Laden has focused on the role of Pakistan, the implications for US–Pakistani relations, the impact on the civil war in Afghanistan and the future of the global jihad. There has been relatively little discussion of the legal (and possibly moral) aspects of the US operation.

International law has an uncomfortable but intimate relationship with the priorities of governments and often has to give way to the political reality. This interaction was evident in the case of bin Laden. The political demands on President Obama must have been immense and immediate, while the legal issues would have been less compelling. Whatever decision the President reached was certain to displease many, but it would appear he handled the competing demands with subtlety.

The importance of promoting the rule of law in a complex community of states should not be overlooked in the euphoria surrounding bin Laden's death. The US has an inherently ambivalent attitude towards international law: witness the ongoing "unauthorised" US drone

attacks in Pakistan. There is also the issue of precedent – if the US can do this, why can't others (Russia, China, Israel)? And what of perceptions about America's place in the world?

The legal issues relate first of all to the apparent unilateral use of military force in a sovereign state without that state's approval. Sovereignty, an old concept which places the state at the centre of the international system, has been under challenge since the Cold War. It remains, however, the binding principle of the international system. One of its main features is that a state must not intervene in another's affairs. This principle is embedded in the UN Charter and other aspects of international law. Does this US action represent yet another exception that weakens the principle? If we move away from sovereignty, what takes its place – the rule of law or the rule of force? In the case of Pakistan, the US cross-border activity has generated some international concern. For example, media reports indicate that our own forces are not permitted to take part in cross-border action, suggesting some concern about its legality.

Controversially, it would seem that the US soldiers had the capacity to capture bin Laden alive, but were under orders to kill. In the end it was President Obama's decision, but the rule of law would have had bin Laden captured and put on trial. A predictable response is that bin Laden was so evil that he did not deserve a trial; a trial would enable him to "grandstand", would aggravate the suffering of those who lost family in Al Qa'ida attacks and even allow the possibility of a not guilty verdict.

All valid concerns but the Geneva Conventions exist to protect unarmed people in conflict. The US's claim that bin Laden's killing was self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter was surely not meant to be taken seriously. It is too similar to the Bush administration's interpretation of pre-emptive self-defence, which has been discredited because of US behaviour.

The rule of law applies regardless of the seriousness of the crime. And there are precedents. Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the planner of the September 11 attacks and

therefore more intimately involved than bin Laden, is to receive a trial. Perhaps even more tellingly, Adolf Eichmann, a main orchestrator of the Final Solution, was guilty of crimes far graver than those committed by bin Laden. Nevertheless, the Israelis captured Eichmann and put him on trial. Similarly, the perpetrators of genocide in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia were tried for their crimes.

Importantly, the experience of the Nuremberg Tribunals, Eichmann, and the genocide trials was that those in the dock were diminished by the process. Their crimes were laid out for all to see and judge, and the culprits were frequently shown to be pathetic characters not deserving of respect. The impact on their standing was considerable.

While President Obama's decision to kill bin Laden may be defensible, we need to ask what has been the impact on world opinion and what such double standards might mean for us all.

*Dr Billingsley is a lecturer in the School of Social Sciences and International Studies.*

# RACE to the BOTTOM

In this edited version of his Wallace Wurth lecture, ABC broadcaster Kerry O'Brien laments the declining standards in both politics and journalism.



**Read newspapers,** watch television news and you will see examples of a serious malaise in the state of politics and media, not just in Australia, but arguably in other liberal democracies as well.

Politicians and journalists are inextricably linked in a kind of necessary love-hate dance that's gone on for centuries, but that in these times seems to be moving only in one direction – down. We live in an age that is in desperate need of enlightened leadership; an age of accelerated living. People struggle to find the time, energy or capacity to fully understand, to think about the massive change going on around them. They necessarily rely on mainstream media. If they are not being well served by the media they go to, either they will not trust it, or end up poorly informed, or worse, misled. There can be no doubt about the depth of cynicism the public applies to both politics and the media.

The political news cycle emanates not just from the press gallery in Canberra, but from political doorstops across the country with short, carefully crafted sound bites for radio, television and now various media online outlets. That then feeds into the radio shock-jock circuit and the 24-hour television news commentaries, which build momentum into the next day's newspapers and so on.

The bottom line is that politics today is in a sick and sorry state, and journalists are in no position to throw stones. The practice of politics seems flat, uninspirational, banal, superficial, uniform, orchestrated, defensive, manipulative, dominated by cynicism, polls (private as well as public) and spin. The 2010 federal election campaign provided plenty of fodder for critics of politicians and journalists.

In his Quarterly Essay last December, titled *Trivial Pursuit*, the respected political journalist and author George Megalogenis said he hadn't seen a campaign "so awful" in his 20 years of journalism. (I would argue the

same for my 45 years.) “It was a flip of a coin who was more annoying: the robotic Prime Minister or the relentlessly negative Opposition Leader ... they delivered no memorable quotes, let alone policies,” Megalogenis wrote. But he doesn’t let journalists off the hook either.

In his just-published book, *Sideshow*, former senior Rudd minister Lindsay Tanner says in his opening line: “The 2010 election campaign was widely derided as the worst in living memory.” But he went on to lay the blame substantially at the door of journalists: “Under siege from commercial pressures and technological innovation, the media are retreating into an entertainment frame that has little tolerance for complex social and economic issues. In turn, politicians and parties are adapting their behaviour to suit the new rules of the game – to such an extent that the contest of ideas is being supplanted by the contest for laughs.”

Sorry Lindsay, you don’t get off the hook quite that easily, even if you did jump ship in a fog of disillusionment. Yes, there is significant truth in your critique of how the media functions today, but your view of media manipulation doesn’t, for instance, explain the appalling state of NSW Labor politics by the time the Keneally Government was decimated by voters last March.

It doesn’t explain how federal Labor went through so many leaders through the Howard years, or why it was necessary for Kevin Rudd to be unceremoniously dumped by his own parliamentary colleagues including almost his entire cabinet, before even his first term as Prime Minister was up. And was it media shortcomings that led Kim Beazley to make that politically fatal decision to make himself and Labor a small policy target going into 2001, because he was convinced John Howard would lose the election with his introduction of the GST.

Lindsay Tanner’s assertion of media blame is really a chicken

and egg situation. For instance, when Tanner says the media sets out to trap politicians, it could equally be argued that a journalist often sets out to test (not necessarily trap) a politician because of the suspicion that the politician is being “highly manipulative” or “resorting to dubious artifice”.

When I began as a cadet journalist at Channel Nine in Brisbane in 1965, there were no video news cameras, more than half the stories were shot without sound, and the rest with an incredibly cumbersome film camera. If a big international story broke in the morning, you could hear it on radio within the hour, read it in that afternoon’s tabloid newspaper, but had to wait another two, sometimes three days, for the television pictures to reach Australia. That’s how long it took for pictures of Kennedy’s assassination in ’63 to make it on air.

**I believe that one well-centred, substantial politician with the capacity to articulate an inspirational vision could change the landscape.**

By 1990 as anchor of a new ABC TV program called *Lateline* I could dial up the world by satellite, and link up with the best minds in science and the arts, business gurus and even political enemies.

Since then, two Gulf Wars have dramatically demonstrated the further leaps in technology driving television news. When coalition forces invaded Iraq in 2003, we sat in our lounge rooms, watching live as tanks with TV cameras mounted on front, rolled across the desert sands towards Baghdad.

So broadcast journalism has never been more immediate,

more flexible. But is it better? To the extent that we can access and report more swiftly the big global stories the answer is obviously yes. But trying to bring any kind of journalistic depth to an innately superficial medium has always been a struggle, and the advent of 24-hour television and the obsession with personality-driven journalism has meant much of today’s television news is more superficial than ever.

This is the age of media management, of a public relations army of image-makers, spin doctors and lobbyists. Politicians have engaged in spin for as long as they’ve existed, but media management has never been more tightly controlled, and the environment for journalists never more challenging.

In an Andrew Olle [Media] Lecture a few years ago, the respected former newspaper editor now independent publisher, Eric Beecher, talked about the remarkable rise of public relations as a kind of partner in the journalistic enterprise of this country.

“I’m certain the average media consumer has absolutely no inkling of the extent to which the stories they see, read or hear have been instigated, assisted or even managed by behind-the-scenes PR people whose only interest is to present their clients and their products in a positive light,” said Beecher.

The strength of the public relations industry is now unhealthily disproportionate to the numbers of journalists dealing with it. As PR numbers have exploded, journalist numbers have remained static or diminished.

Media organisations these days are producing more with less. Experience is less valued; newsrooms are getting markedly younger simply because youth is cheaper to buy. There may be talent, energy and ambition in abundance, but not experience. There are fewer journalistic mentors carrying that invaluable bank of history in their memories, an appropriate degree of

scepticism, an understanding of how the world works, and the scars to go with it. Often the stories are more complex, the pitfalls are many, and journalists are swamped with an avalanche of spin. Even with the help of Google, proper scrutiny of our institutions, public and private, is undoubtedly more difficult.

Yes, journalism is in transition, the possibilities of new media technology and outlets are potentially exciting, but I don’t think we can have any real idea at this stage of exactly what we are transitioning to. And I don’t think there are any guarantees that the medium-term horizon at least, is rosy for those who worship at the altar of consistent quality journalism. Nor should we lose sight that new media can easily be manipulated too.

Journalism worldwide has always faced enormous challenges, but rarely more than now. Producing news is not just another factory assembly line producing its own version of baked beans or widgets. But that’s increasingly how our industry is seen by those who run it.

In the end I’m not going to answer my own question: Who’s winning the race to the bottom? The answer to this will always be in the eye of the beholder, and I’m going to resist the cop-out of saying journalists and politicians are running neck and neck down the same slope. We have to hope, and work towards the time when the race turns back towards another peak. At the same time, while people decry the media’s excessive concentration on the personalities of politicians at the expense of policy debate, I believe, as has occasionally happened in the past, that one well-centred, substantial politician with the capacity to articulate an inspirational vision and the determination to put it at least partly into effect, could change the landscape.

*For the full speech, go to the “Luminary Speakers” collection of UNSWTV at [www.tv.unsw.edu.au](http://www.tv.unsw.edu.au)*





Photo: Tamara Voninski, fairfaxphotos.com

# new name TO CONFRONT an old enemy

**David Cooper has led a centre internationally respected for its work on HIV and other infectious diseases for 25 years. Now it has been given a new name, the Kirby Institute. By Louisa Wright.**

**Human rights defender ... Scientia Professor David Cooper with an artwork created by his daughter about the HIV epidemic.**

**When Australia's first case of HIV** was diagnosed at Sydney's St Vincent's Hospital in the early 1980s, it was no surprise to members of the immunology team, who had been watching the frightening epidemic unfold in the United States. Knowing it was only a matter of time before patients showing the inexplicable range of symptoms walked through the hospital's doors, the team had put in place every preparation it could.

Among those experts was David Cooper, who a quarter of a century later remains in the field of HIV treatment and research as UNSW Scientia Professor and director of the newly named Kirby Institute. "What we couldn't imagine then was that 25 years later we would still be looking for answers," says Professor Cooper. It was as part of the hunt for answers that the Federal

Government established three national centres – among them the Kirby's forerunner, the National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research (NCHECR). (Another, the National Centre in HIV Social Research is also located at UNSW.) As the NCHECR expanded over the years so too did its scope across a range of infectious diseases, notably viral hepatitis and sexually transmissible infections. Today it is lauded internationally.

To reflect its more wide-ranging research and to mark its 25th year, NCHECR has been renamed the Kirby Institute for infection and immunity in society, in honour of former High Court Justice Michael Kirby. Kirby's association with the centre stretches back decades. Professor Cooper acknowledges Kirby as a longstanding friend and supporter of HIV research and prevention, and a long-time

champion of health and human rights, particularly for those with a limited voice who exist on the margins of society. "We are so pleased that he allowed us to use his name, because a great deal of what we do is in the areas of health that affect people on the fringes of society and whose access to health is often impaired," Cooper says. "It has also allowed us to acknowledge that the breadth of our work is a great deal more than HIV." The Kirby Institute's 11 research programs and groups now include Aboriginal health, justice health and sexual health in addition to HIV, viral hepatitis, clinical trials, laboratory research, surveillance and biostatistics. Epidemiological, social and behavioural research complement the clinical and technical expertise. In accepting the honour, Kirby says he's proud the centre will bear his name.

“The only good thing to come out of HIV, amongst many terrible burdens, is that it has helped us as a society come to grips with the realities and the science.”

“The only good thing to come out of HIV, amongst many terrible burdens, is that it has helped us as a society come to grips with the realities and the science,” says Kirby.

“Jonathan Mann [the late and former WHO AIDS program head] used to teach that you don’t base a single policy on prejudice or intuition or dogma, base it on good science and once you take that approach you get a new perspective of the vulnerable groups – the gay men, the people who use drugs, the sex workers, the special vulnerability of women, the prisoners, the refugees – and that has been the core of this centre.”

The 25-year history of HIV in Australia, is largely also the institute’s history. Cooper recounts the stories of five individuals infected in different ways through the stages of the epidemic.

In 1989, when AIDS paranoia was at its height, HIV-positive sex worker Sharleen Spiteri created a media storm when she said on a popular television program she tried to get her clients to practise safe sex, but sometimes they wouldn’t wear condoms. In what now can only be seen as a draconian overreaction, the NSW government took Spiteri from her flat under police guard and detained her in a locked AIDS ward. She spent much of the following 16 years under 24-hour supervision and became the most expensive public patient in NSW history. She died, still under a public health order, five years ago.

“Sharleen’s story took place against the backdrop of ignorance, panic, homophobia and for those of us at the coalface, countless funerals,” Cooper says. “We worked to solve as many of the early puzzles as we could in the lab and the clinic, while we were desperately trying to keep alive the stream of patients who came through our doors.”

The second person was Colin Loker, who had received a blood transfusion about a year before his HIV was diagnosed. “When I called the Blood Bank, asking that they trace the donors, I was assured that all would be ladies from the North Shore,” Cooper says. “And that was three-quarters correct. Three were nice North Shore ladies. The fourth was an equally nice gay man from Darlinghurst and we confirmed Australia’s first case of HIV through the blood supply.”



A toast to the Kirby Institute ...  
(l-r) Michael Kirby and  
Vice-Chancellor Fred Hilmer

Photo: Claire Reynolds

This led to the rapid introduction of testing regimes that ensured Australia an uncontaminated blood supply. It also highlighted the enormous importance of epidemiology, or the tracking of the causes and distributions of infection, and education campaigns for all health workers.

His third and fourth examples were mother and son. Suzy Sidewinder was an American-born actress who was unaware that an early flirtation with injecting drugs had infected her with HIV. Suzy’s son with Australian husband Vince Lovegrove, Troy, was infected in utero. Suzy died in 1987, two years after Troy’s birth. She was the subject of the HIV awareness documentary, *Suzi’s Story*. Another film, *A Kid Called Troy*, screened shortly after Troy’s

death in 1993. “Suzy and Troy Lovegrove were the public faces of mother-to-child transmission in Australia, a situation which happily now almost never occurs thanks to our universal testing of mothers-to-be and the mechanisms of treating HIV-infected pregnant women.”

The fifth person was colleague Brett Tindall, one of many gay physicians drawn to HIV research in the early days. “Brett was very bright and

exceptionally hard working, and together he and I slogged through those early years of research,” Cooper says. “Brett died of HIV infection in 1994 and we miss him still.”

Since then, Cooper has been involved with the development of all 22 antiretroviral drugs. He has seen the treatment options expand from the earliest therapy, AZT, to the present standard of care, combination antiretroviral therapy.

But the world can’t afford to keep making and buying the vast quantities of HIV drug therapies needed, Cooper says. “The only answer is to prevent infection. We have been able to celebrate some encouraging advances, although they can each only be described as modest. We must continue to focus on biomedical prevention.”

## Feeney donates \$10 million

Along with the name change, the Kirby Institute is to get new surroundings.

Chuck Feeney of Atlantic Philanthropies has made a \$10 million donation towards a new \$80 million facility for the Kirby Institute on UNSW’s Kensington campus and a clinical centre in Darlinghurst. Initial funding for the facilities has been provided by the federal and state governments (\$20 million from each), with \$20 million coming from university resources.

A who’s who of the HIV research and health community, business, politics and human rights advocates were among the 300 people at a recent gala ceremony to mark the renaming and acknowledge Mr Feeney’s donation.

Professor Cooper paid tribute to Mr Feeney, who was a surprise guest of honour, travelling from Canberra where he’d been in private meetings with the Prime Minister.

“[His] style of philanthropy can be described as muscular, with a remarkable track record of leveraging matching funds from government and other sources. He understands that major health threats to the social fabric need a major response,” Cooper said.

Other dignitaries included former federal health minister and architect of Australia’s far-sighted HIV response, Dr Neal Blewett, Federal Member for Wentworth Malcolm Turnbull and UNSW Chancellor David Gonski. Also celebrating were Mr Kirby’s partner Johan van Vloten, and the former judge’s 95-year-old father, Donald.

# THE BUSINESS\$ OF NOT-FOR- PROFITS\$

**The not-for-profit sector has come of age with the Budget announcement of a one-stop regulator to put the so-called “third sector” on an equal footing with business and government, writes John Synott.**

**Every day across Australia** millions of people open their doors, their wallets and their hearts to the work of not-for-profit (NFP) organisations. Yet despite such a pervasive role in society, NFPs have lingered largely on its fringes. Now, Prime Minister Julia Gillard is giving this important sector the chance to move out of the shadows.

Gillard has formally recognised Australia’s \$50 billion NFP sector with an office in her department dedicated to creating the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission, which was announced in the May Budget. The Commission will be a one-stop regulator for NFP organisations that will cost \$53.6 million over four years. In December Prime Minister Gillard also appointed the Not-for-profit Sector Reform Council to elevate the sector’s role and advise on its regulation.

The reform council has the opportunity to take a clean sheet of paper and draw up larger roles for NFP organisations in Australia’s future development – part of a wave of international interest in building up the “third sector” of the economy.

In Australia, the breakthrough came in 2000 when the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) reported on the NFP sector and helped to give it an identity. Now the sector is increasingly being recognised for its contributions to both society and the economy, in particular in health, education and community services. The Federal Government sees it as a partner to deliver services where there are gaps in its programs and says a strong relationship is crucial to the success of its social inclusion agenda. ABS surveys show that NFPs are generally viewed as more trustworthy than government or business.

While Gillard’s moves are welcome, Australia is playing catch-up as they come a decade after Tony Blair’s government in the UK established its Office of the Third Sector to promote another way to solve social problems by harnessing community groups in entrepreneurial ventures.

An example is the New Philanthropy Capital, set up in 2002 by investment banking staff at Goldman Sachs as they tried to identify the best way to give money to charity.

They recognised a dearth of information and advice for potential donors and filled the gap with a marketplace linking charities and funders.

In the same spirit, the Centre for Social Impact (CSI) at UNSW reached an agreement with the previous state government to pilot a social impact bond – a financial instrument that pays a return to investors based on achievement of agreed social outcomes – to be used on early intervention programs in areas such as juvenile justice, mental health and services assisting young families at risk.

In the US, President Barack Obama put up US\$50 million seed money in 2009 for a Social Innovation Fund to attract another US\$150 million from philanthropists for “intermediaries” to encourage innovative NFP groups in areas where welfare is making slow progress. The President has recently asked Congress to allocate US\$100 million to test the application of social impact bonds.

The idea of grouping organizations that are not run by the state or the market into a “third sector” is relatively new. It arose in the mid-1960s when US economists were invited to consider the effect of the 1969 Tax Act reforms on philanthropy and identified the defining question as how non-government organisations distributed their profits.

According to Hungarian economist Mihaly Hogue, the existence of the NFP sector is a response by unsatisfied customers to the failures of the market and the government. The size of the sector is determined by the number – or proportion – of customers whose demand the government is unable to fulfil. Contract failure theory explains how NFPs compete efficiently in a marketplace where trust is important, says Hogue. Yet, internationally, the enthusiasm for social entrepreneurship has run ahead of its effects, according to a sober assessment in *The Economist*, which reports that “successful innovations have spread only slowly, if at all”.

Australia has some runs on the board, but the government still lacks a coherent policy framework for the third sector. This is despite a string of inquiries over the past 15 years. Australia’s Minister for Social Inclusion, Tanya Plibersek, says the NFP sector has been widely consulted and it’s now time for implementation.

The commission, which is expected to begin in 2012, will deliver improved transparency and accountability. The stakes are high, involving 600,000 diverse organisations – although less than 60,000 are economically significant – from sports clubs to private schools, hospitals and welfare groups, multinational charities, business associations, churches, environmental or



Les Hems ... a new approach is needed for the not-for-profit sector

A lot of issues in the not-for-profit sector have been left untouched for a long time.

any other group that does not distribute profits to members.

Just how a national regulator will operate is up for grabs. Five previous reports on NFPs produced a lot of recommendations, but little in the way of implementation, notes Linda Lavarch, former Queensland attorney-general and academic, who now chairs the NFP Sector Reform Council. "The sector is very diverse – a lot of issues and a whole lot of areas have been left untouched for a long time," she says. The government appointed the reform council, comprising people who have a good relationship with the sector, to give strategic advice on implementing the recommendations from last year's Productivity Commission report.

"The scoping paper recommends a centralised, coordinating role instead of filling in forms and being the place where charities get a gaming licence. Until now, charities have been regulated at state level under the Corporations Acts or at the corporate level by ASIC. A guiding principle is reducing red tape," says Lavarch.

There is the option of direct regulation and indirect regulation, Lavarch points out.

Adding to the dilemmas is the fact that there's no strict definition of what a charity is in Australia. Applications for NFP status have traditionally been undertaken by the Australian Taxation Office.

"[The new commission] could deal with applications for tax concessions for charities that fundraise – and so act

as a gateway to concessions, deciding who's in and who's out. As a national and independent regulator, it will give a face to the sector [just] as Tony Blair's Office of the Third Sector gave it a distinct identity [in the UK]."

While Australians are familiar with the parts – community welfare services, the environment movement and housing initiatives – Lavarch says they often don't recognise the third sector as a whole. She says giving the sector a united front could change that.

CSI's Andreas Ortmann, professor of Experimental and Behavioural Economics at the Australian School of Business, agrees with the Productivity Commission's analysis. "Given the sector's tremendous importance in revenues, volunteered contributions and employment – and in its impact on the social fabric of Australian society – the lack of reasonable standards of accountability and transparency in the use of public and private funds is troubling and in dire need of fixing." Yet Ortmann cautions against following outdated Anglo-American regulatory frameworks and recommends fresh approaches.

CSI Head of Research Les Hems agrees: "A new approach is needed for the internet age. [We need to use] web technology to construct a portal that exploits data across a distributed network of existing regulatory agencies such as tax, state licensing and consumer protection functions. The portal should hold a full list of not-for-profits. It needs to be proportional with a high level of functionality for large and service providing not-for-profits but it needs a light touch for the tens of thousands of small volunteer-run organisations. It also needs to acknowledge and accommodate the emergence of hybrid organisational forms including social enterprises."

Economists should be involved because they understand that regulation is about risk and incentives, says Hems, but "you also want visible incentives – so the NFPs can be seen to be performing well".

"We now behave very differently as consumers. We use new technology to check things out. If you give money to charity and do not get the promised newsletter, you give a thumbs down on the website. It's a small way for a

citizen to hold organisations to account. But you can display how an organisation has delivered on its promises. It encourages self-regulation," he says.

With the NFP sector coming of age, the big question now is how will it cope with its new responsibilities? Can it fulfil its role as a third pillar in our economy?

For this story and others like it, go to [Knowledge@ASB](mailto:Knowledge@ASB): <http://knowledgeasb.unsw.edu.au>



**SUPPORT FOR WOMEN IN RESEARCH**

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Photo: Brett Boardman Photography



A shed of his own ...  
Allan Giddy with his artwork  
at "Buffer Zone"

## The largest exhibition yet by COFA sits in a unique setting – between an environmental sanctuary and a former military site, writes Susi Hamilton.

When artist **Allan Giddy** set up a garden shed at Sydney Olympic Park, an endangered green and gold bell frog immediately took up residence.

"It was tiny – I had never seen anything like it before," says Giddy, who is the co-curator of an international exhibition "Buffer Zone", which is being held at the Newington Armoury.

While the frog was gently returned to its habitat, the incident seemed symbolic: the purpose of the exhibition is to explore the idea of the buffer between humanity and nature and the friction they create.

"The site itself is called the Buffer Zone," explains Giddy. "The gallery is a bunker with earth packed up all around it. It's this really strange space, a kind of no-man's land set in a hollow and so we decided to make the artwork about the same theme."

The Armoury, a former military site, backs on to an estuarine sanctuary, which is strictly off-limits to humans and is home to the

exquisite frogs, whose cacophony is heard as you walk past.

"It's a great contradiction. You have this old military area with unexploded ordnance and next to that is this area of regeneration," he says.

The site also bears the marks of Indigenous occupation, overwritten by colonial settlement and industrialisation.

The artworks are just as varied.

Co-curated by Canadian Ihor Holubizky, "Buffer Zone" has 18 artworks in a space equivalent to a floor of the Museum of Contemporary Art. Five of the works are by COFA artists.

Outside is one of the largest collections of solar-powered artworks yet displayed in Australia. One portrays two menacing, blow-up figures, like those seen outside car yards, fighting near the entry to the bunker.

Inside is more experimental art, including the largest rubbing yet displayed in Sydney – a 22-metre impression of the

HMAS *Adelaide* by COFA Dean, Professor Ian Howard.

"Everyone's attacked the theme in different ways, but they all come back to the idea of Buffer Zone," says Giddy, who convinced artists from Finland, Ireland and Canada to take part. "These zones come out of a need or desire for protection and/or segregation."

Giddy, who is the Director of COFA's Environmental Research Initiative for Art, has also created a work with Atanas Djonov, a part-time COFA lecturer, about nationalism, identity and place. And that's where the shed comes in.

"We are working with the idea of exposing some of the junk in our lives, but also working with the idea that we are both harbouring lost and forgotten memories of our homelands – I am originally from New Zealand and he comes from Bulgaria."

People aren't allowed in the "blokes' shed", but they can listen to sound recordings through four loudspeakers and they can peep

through venetian blinds. A live video recording is also displayed inside the real gallery space.

"It's about the barriers we put up ... and the shed is a symbol of that," says Giddy.

Giddy, whose art is best known for its environmental themes, has again used the natural world as an underlying theme.

"Our idea is to regenerate broken, damaged and polluted areas – so that's why we're here," he says. "This is a very damaged area. We want to use the land in a responsible way."

The exhibition is the result of a partnership between COFA, the Sydney Olympic Park Authority and the arts organisation Broken Hill Incorporated. Some of the works will be eventually exhibited in Broken Hill.

The exhibition, like your typical blokes' shed, is open only at weekends. It closes on 31 July.

For more information go to [www.sydneyolympicpark.com.au](http://www.sydneyolympicpark.com.au) and follow the links to Newington Armoury.

# Death & Beauty

**UNSW Literary Fellow, Julia Leigh, has used a recurring nightmare as inspiration for her debut film, *Sleeping Beauty*, an erotic modern-day fairytale. By Fran Strachan.**

**One of the most powerful lines** from *Sleeping Beauty*, “You will go to sleep: you will wake up. It will be as if those hours never existed,” explores one of Julia Leigh’s latent fears. It is a fear that inspired a film about youth, age, death and beauty.

“After my first novel, *The Hunter*, was published I felt very exposed by the publicity process. I had this recurring nightmare of being filmed in my sleep and that played into the film as a deep mistrust about what actually happens when you sleep.”

*Sleeping Beauty* is a haunting modern-day fairytale about Lucy (played by Australian actor Emily Browning), a student who drifts into prostitution and finds her niche as a woman who sleeps, drugged, in a “Sleeping Beauty chamber” while older men indulge their erotic fantasies that require Lucy’s absolute submission.

The chamber scenes are confronting. The audience is caught between horror and fascination as the men violate Lucy either sadistically or by admiring and touching her prone body.

As a viewer it’s a strange and intimate experience, amplified by the lingering shots which Leigh, as the director, chose to use.

“I decided to use long shots that covered a whole scene. In the chamber scenes there’s almost a sense of complicity for the viewer, being there and seeing it all unfold, the audience becomes a tender witness of the events.”

Leigh, who teaches fiction and screenwriting as part of her UNSW fellowship, had never been behind a camera before she wrote



One of the new faces of independent cinema ...  
Julia Leigh

**“Heartbreaking, tender and terrifying”**  
– Jane Campion on Leigh’s directorial debut recently screened at Cannes.



and directed *Sleeping Beauty* which landed on the Hollywood “Black List” (the much-anticipated annual list of unproduced screenplays) in 2008. Later that year Leigh was named one of the 25 New Faces of independent cinema by *Filmmaker Magazine* (US).

“I did an amazing amount of preparation. I read film scripts, went to an actors’ workshop and observed a friend on a TV set. I watched a lot of films that I loved with the sound turned

down. I would ask myself, ‘Where is the camera?’”

Leigh believes the original fairytale has deep roots in our collective imagination. Visual references to the story of *Sleeping Beauty* are scattered throughout, a reminder of Lucy’s lost innocence. A trail of red berries, a hooded velvet coat, a so-called wicked woman who puts girls to sleep and a strange house in the country all tease the viewer’s memory.

Director, Jane Campion, who mentored Leigh throughout the filming has called it heartbreaking, tender and terrifying. She believes Leigh is a “new, fully confident cinema voice ... with an extraordinary talent”.

Leigh says her literary background assisted her move to the screen. “Both novelist and filmmaker work with the ‘flow of time’. They work with ‘character’. They create detailed worlds and they both have something they want to explore,” she says.

Leigh also burst onto the literary scene. Her debut novel, *The Hunter*, which won awards internationally, including a nomination for the US National Book Critics Circle Award was published in 2000. She has been mentored in the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative by Nobel Laureate, Toni Morrison. She tried screenplay writing, she says, as “diversion therapy” while she worked on her latest novella, *Disquiet*.

But Leigh says there are massive differences when it comes to writing for film.

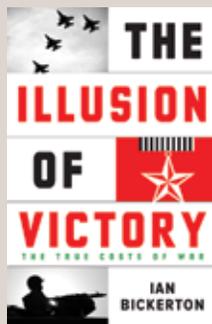
“When you take your script into the world and start collaborating with extra people it’s a very different process. It’s a solo journey because the director is the only person who holds the film as a whole in their head. You are making thousands of decisions that go to establishing the most ephemeral of things – tone, atmosphere and tension.”

There are other mediums she still wants to explore.

“I really resist this idea that artists get streamlined into one medium, this hyper professionalisation, I think we’re all very adaptable, I’d like to take up something else now.”

*The University’s volunteer U Committee sponsors the UNSW Literary Fellowship.*

*Sleeping Beauty is part of this month’s Sydney Film Festival.*



***The Illusion of Victory: The true costs of war* – by Ian Bickerton, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, School of History and Philosophy**

This book demonstrates that most of the rewards of victory in modern warfare are either exaggerated or false. When the ostensible benefits of victory are examined a generation after a war, it becomes inescapably evident that the defeated belligerent rarely conforms to the demands and expectations of the victor. Consequently, long-term political and military stability is denied to both the victorious power and to the defeated one. As a result, neither victory nor defeat deter further outbreaks of war.

**Publisher: Melbourne University Press**

***Creativity and Innovation in Business and Beyond* – edited by Janet Chan (with Leon Mann)**

This book illustrates the ways in which creativity spurs innovation and vice versa – not only in business and management, but throughout the social sciences. Including contributions from experts in policy, history, economics and psychology, in addition to business and management, this volume explores the way these skills can be used in a range of sectors and settings.

**Publisher: Routledge**



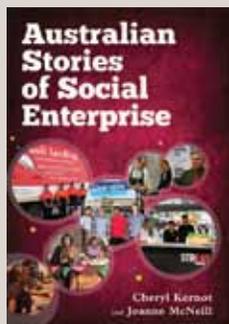
***Stillness in a Mobile World* – by Gillian Fuller, School of Art, UNSW's COFA (with David Bissell)**

This collection of essays from leading scholars intervenes in debates around mobility, life, animation and thought by foregrounding the radically ambiguous concept of “stillness” as a crucial site for critical interrogation. Stillness provides both a challenge and an invitation to consider how the dynamics of passivity, suspension and stasis are integral to our understanding of life on the move.

**Publisher: Routledge**

***Australian Stories of Social Enterprise* – by Cheryl Kernot, Centre for Social Impact (with Joanne McNeill)**

This book aims to share ideas between Australia’s social entrepreneurs. These include businesses trading for social, environmental and/or cultural purposes and, as a business model, are gaining attention globally, particularly in the UK, Canada and the US. The book provides a snapshot of perspectives from Australian social entrepreneurs on their own and their organisations’ experiences. It is based on face-to-face interviews with 33 organisations between September 2009 and February 2010. The book is available from Parramatta City Council or from the Centre



for Social Impact. The authors will not receive royalties, as they want to make the book freely available to encourage social enterprises.

**Publisher: Breakout Design Print Web**

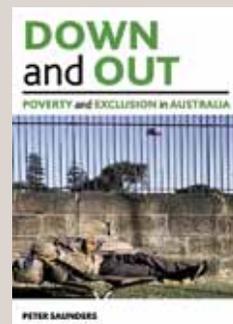
***Beyond White Guilt* – by Sarah Maddison, Indigenous Policy and Dialogue Research Unit**

This book is a provocative call for white Australians to take personal responsibility for the ongoing impact of colonisation on Aboriginal Australians. Maddison’s take on the running sore of black–white relations offers a genuinely constructive alternative when so many other approaches have failed. She argues that there is no point in looking again to governments for a solution to these challenges. Rather, it is up to us, all of us. We need to acknowledge our collective responsibility, change at a deep level, and develop a revitalised view of our national self. Only then will we develop policies and practical solutions that work.

**Publisher: Allen and Unwin**

***Down and Out: Poverty and Exclusion in Australia* – by Peter Saunders, Social Policy Research Unit**

This landmark study provides the first comprehensive assessment of the nature and associations between



the three main forms of social disadvantage in Australia: poverty, deprivation and social exclusion. Drawing on Saunders’ extensive research and his links with welfare practitioners, it explains the limitations of existing approaches and presents new findings that build on the insights of disadvantaged Australians and views about the essentials of life, providing the basis for a new deprivation-based poverty measure.

**Publisher: Policy Press**

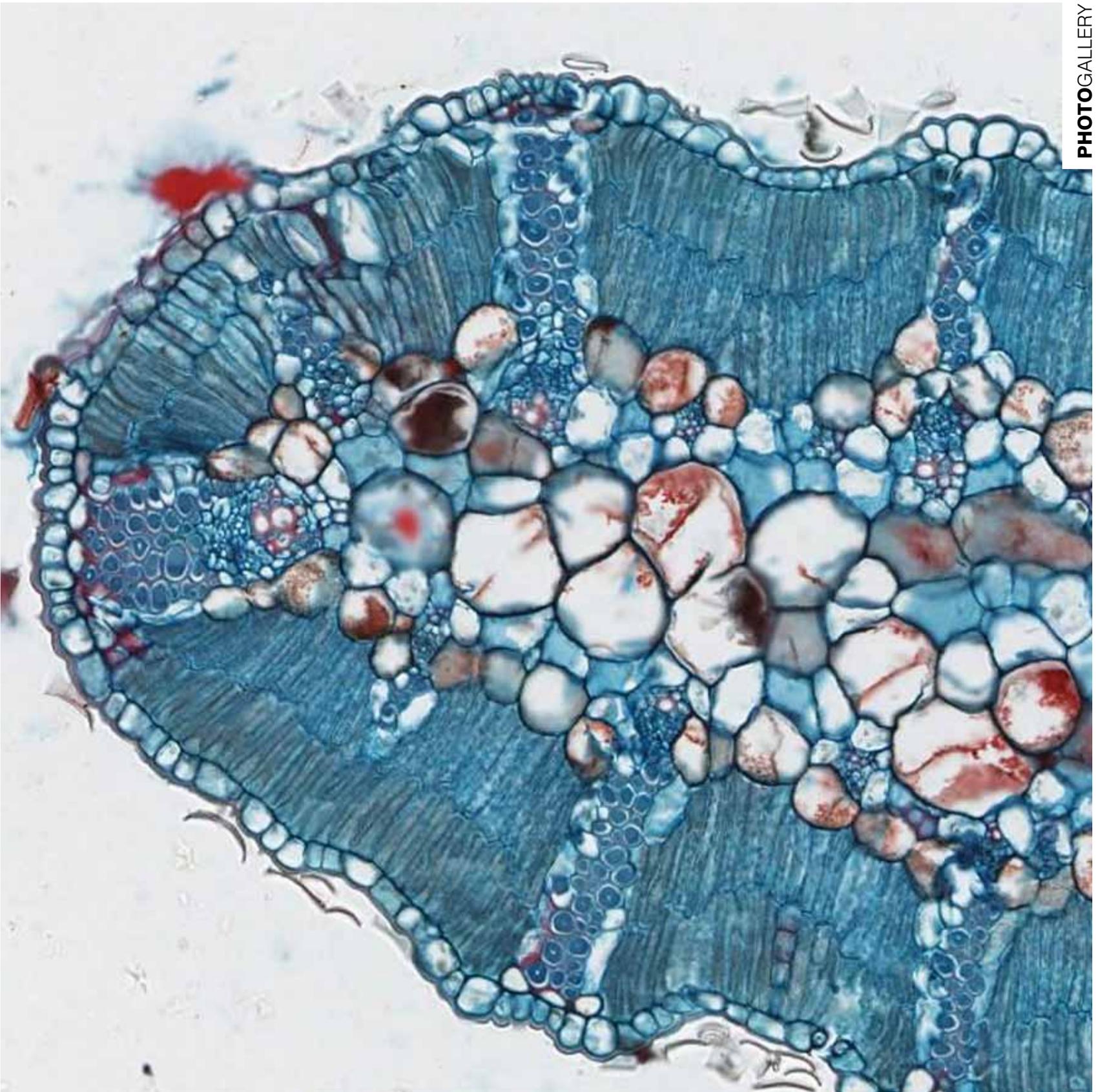
***Scenario* – by Edward Sheer, School of English, Media and Performing Arts**

*Scenario* is a world first: an artificially intelligent, 360-degree, 3D cinematic installation foreshadowing the way we will experience cinema in decades to come. This book, with an introduction by pre-eminent theorist, artist and curator Peter Weibel, sheds light on a groundbreaking work created by new media artists, writers and computer scientists at the Interactive Cinema Research Centre at UNSW. *Scenario* will be screened at the iCinema this month (see In brief, page 4).

**Publisher: UNSW Press**

**Suggestions for new books to include in the next issue of Uniken should be sent to [uniken@unsw.edu.au](mailto:uniken@unsw.edu.au).**





## A CLOSER LOOK AT NATURE

This image is a cross-section of what is commonly referred to as the “leaf” of the Australian native plant, the Acacia. (Its technical name is the phyllode.) The image is from the UNSW/ALTC Virtual Slide Repository, which includes over 600 high-resolution scans of human, animal and plant tissues. UNSW has one of the largest collections of virtual slides, as well as some of the best computer teaching laboratory facilities for virtual microscopy, anywhere in the world. While the use of virtual slides for teaching Histology and Pathology to medical students is well established, UNSW is the first institution to extend this approach to Botany and Zoology.



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We already offer 30 scholarships to disadvantaged students and hope to expand that to 40 with this appeal.

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