Handle with care

Can a change of climate save the mountain pygmy-possum?

Smooth operator
Doors open on new light rail serving campus commuters

Meet the Dean
Vlado Perkovic’s unexpected path to Medicine

The future is micro
Why 2020 is the year we define the war on waste
From the Vice-Chancellor


T he much-anticipated light rail service heralds a new era of connectivity between UNSW and the heart of Sydney. The now familiar red carriages running past Gate 9 are a far cry from the old trams that served the eastern suburbs when UNSW was in its infancy. An advantage of the light rail is the decreased dependence on cars and buses which will equate to an estimated 663,000-tonne reduction in emissions over 30 years. You’ll find more interesting facts and practical information on our newest mode of public transport in the magazine.

There’s also an article on Professor Veena Sahajwalla and her UNSW Centre for Sustainable Materials Research and Technology. Many countries, including Australia, face bans on shipping waste material offshore. Veena has grasped the opportunity to ramp up the commercialisation of Microfactorie technology to turn waste into valuable materials, while creating jobs and technology to turn waste into valuable materials, while creating jobs and enhancing social and economic outcomes — often in remote and regional communities that need it most.

In this edition we also learn more about our new Dean of UNSW Medicine, Professor Vladimir Perkovic. Vladimir’s story is fascinating, having left Croatia with his family in the late 1960s as a refugee and working his way up through a career in medicine to become one of Australia’s top kidney disease researchers. And now, luckily for us, leading UNSW Medicine through an exciting new chapter.

UNSW Magazine gives us a snapshot of the talented people and diverse work that make our University the educational, research and social success that it is. I hope reading it brings you the same sense of pride in our achievements as it does me.

Professor Ian Jacobs

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“Language and communication are the absolute basis of democracy.” Magda Szubanski.

Szbanski’s high honour ‘up there’ with a Logie

A ward-winning actor, author and human rights campaigner Magda Szubanski has been awarded UNSW Sydney’s highest honour – an honorary doctorate in recognition of outstanding achievements in the performing arts, and eminent service to society by advancing important causes.

Ms Szubanski said the Doctor of Letters, honoris causa, was “up there” with her other accolades, including AACTAs, Logies and literary awards. She said it would mean an exciting ongoing association with the University.

“I am enormously honoured to receive this doctorate,” said Ms Szubanski, who serves as an advisory committee member for the Australian Human Rights Institute at UNSW. “I am really looking forward to working with this eclectic group of people, this interdisciplinary approach.”

UNSW President and Vice-Chancellor Professor Ian Jacobs said: “Magda is an exceptional Australian who has led as a TV and film actress, author, comedian and human rights campaigner. Her dedication to humanity and courage are an inspiration.”

Ms Szubanski said two actions rooted in the ivory tower and actually connecting with people about problems that concern them – that’s where she feels the creative power of her work is at its best.

For me, thought leadership is increasingly about stepping outside of your comfort zone and actually trying to look at the world through the universal perspectives of other people. Academics like me would previously have spent most of our lives just documenting how much seamen and seagulls we are losing,” said Associate Professor Vergés. “I am a big advocate for spending more time talking to the public.

“Another way of doing things”: Adriana Vergés is connecting with people to talk about real solutions for problems.

Operation Crayweed shows how Adriana is thinking ahead

A marine ecologist using rigorous science and innovative public engagement techniques has won UNSW Sydney’s inaugural Emerging Thought Leader prize. Associate Professor Adriana Vergés was selected by a prestigious panel of judges for her ability to merge science, the arts and powerful storytelling to inspire the community to respond to environmental crises, and to share this success story globally.

Her ability to turn ideas into action has been proven by the success of Operation Crayweed, a project to restore lost seaways to Sydney’s coastal waters. She engaged artists, producers and academics to create an awareness campaign and take the science to the public.

“For me, thought leadership is increasingly about stepping outside of your comfort zone and actually trying to look at the world through the universal perspectives of other people. Academics like me would previously have spent most of our lives just documenting how much seamen and seagulls we are losing,” said Associate Professor Vergés, who won $8000.

“This year, I think the best universities in the world are really encouraging another way of doing things that involves stepping out of that ivory tower and actually connecting with people about problems that concern them and also actually doing something about it.”

Managing editor: Peter Harrison
Designer: Bill Iann/Medipix
Contributors: Eri Berg, Lucy Carroll, Isabella Dubach, Richard Freeman, Jane Garcia, Lucian Gilbert, James Riley, Ivy Shih, Bridget Spinks, Stuart Swift, Christian Tietz

The UNSW Council, by unanimous decision, has reappointed David Gonski as Chancellor for another four-year term. Mr Gonski has been a formidable advocate for education, the University and its mission since his appointment in 2002. He is one of Australia’s most prominent business leaders and philanthropists, with board-level roles for Australia and New Zealand Banking Group, the Art Gallery of NSW Trust, Sydney Airport Corporation and the Loopy Institute for International Policy. Mr Gonski is also a Patron of the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation and Baker Foundation, and a Founding Panel Member of Adara Partners. He chaired the Australian Government’s Review of Funding for Schooling producing the important and influential ‘Gonski Report’.

UNSW Magazine
Nolan at the nexus of business and humanity

Associate Professor Justine Nolan has been named Academic of the Year at the annual Lawyers Weekly Australian Law Awards. The Academic of the Year Award “recognises the academic who is most effectively shaping legal undergraduate and JD students, instilling a passion for the law, professional excellence and expertise.”

Associate Professor Nolan studies the intersection of business and human rights, particularly corporate responsibility for human rights and modern slavery. Her book Addressing Modern Slavery, co-authored with Martin Roisman from UNSW, examines how consumers, business and government are part of both the problem and the solution in curbing modern slavery in global supply chains (see page 22).

The 2018 recipient of the UNSW Vice-Chancellor’s Award for Teaching Excellence, Associate Professor Nolan has pioneered new technologies in the classroom and introduced one of the faculty’s most popular courses, a human rights elective taught in New York.

She has worked in public interest and private legal practices and in various expert advisory roles.

Tomoyuki Hachiego, who graduated from UNSW with a Bachelor of Arts, Law in 2013, is co-founder of the legal startup Sprituitar, which won the Innovator of the Year Award. The firm aims to provide faster, simpler and more affordable legal services to small business owners and entrepreneurs.

UNSW Law is a partner for the Awards, which celebrate the year’s best law-related work.

Intensive care specialist receives top honour

UNSW has awarded a Doctor of Science to John Myburgh AO, Professor of Intensive Care Medicine and Director of the Critical Care at the John Dower Institute, for his outstanding contribution to the field of critical care and trauma.

Professor Myburgh has published more than 200 research papers and has contributed to changing intensive care policy and practices all over the world.

He is a senior intensive care physician at the St George Hospital, Sydney, an honorary Professor at the Monash University School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, and a Foundation Member and Past-Chairman of the Australian and New Zealand Intensive Care Society Clinical Trials Group.

He was instrumental in establishing the Australian and New Zealand Intensive Care Research Centre at the Monash University, School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, as well as the College of Intensive Care Medicine. He has received more than $77 million in research funding and made a substantial contribution to education in intensive care medicine.

He is a current Council Member and Secretary-General for the World Federation of Societies of Intensive and Critical Care Medicine and Fellow of the Australian Academy of Health and Medical Sciences.

In 2014 he was made an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) for distinguished service to medicine as an intensive care medical practitioner, educator and researcher, and as an international innovator in patient management.

More than 200 research papers leading to more than 10,000 citations of his work: 1970s.

Incentive for more young PhD students to take up careers in medicine as an intensive care medical practitioner, educator and researcher, and as an international innovator in patient management.

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**UNSW Magazine**
The arrival of light rail provides an efficient and environmental option for people bound for Kensington campus, writes Megan Maurice.

When crowds of people chased the last tram to La Perouse down the road in 1961, waving goodbye to a Sydney institution, nobody imagined that in a distant future they would again see trams carrying crowds of people through the eastern suburbs.

Things are a little different now – the faded green and yellow carriages have been replaced by sleek red machines, conductors no longer perch at the back door and the routes have changed somewhat. But the romance and excitement around light rail has remained and with the first branch of the new CBD and South East Light Rail opening in December, all eyes are on Randwick.

Like its predecessor, the new light rail begins its journey from Circular Quay, linking with the ferry services to deliver commuters to the eastern suburbs. The 12km route makes its way through the city, stopping at Bridge Street, Wynyard, QVB, Town Hall, Chinatown and Haymarket before reaching Central station, where many UNSW staff and students will board.

The new light rail platforms are located on Chalmers Street, just outside the entrance to the train station, and is known as Central Chalmers Street to ensure there is no confusion with the Stop on the Inner West line, which departs just outside the intercity platforms. It consists of a side platform closest to the train station and an island platform, each 90 metres in length.

From there the trains head down Devonshire Street and through Savoy Hill to Anzac Parade before splitting at Alison Road. The Randwick branch heads down Alison Road, past Randwick Racecourse and UNSW’s High Street entrance, near Gate 9, before continuing on to Randwick. The Kingsford branch – which is due to open in 2020 – takes in ES Marks Athletics Field, the Anzac Parade entrance to UNSW and finishes up at The Juniors Kingsford.

Each tram is 67 metres long and capable of carrying up to 450 passengers, which is roughly equivalent to nine standard buses, making them among the longest passenger trams in the world. The light rail is a frequency-based service, rather than running to a timetable, and trams are to depart every four minutes between the CBD and Moore Park and every eight minutes to Randwick and Kingsford from 7am to 7pm, light rail’s ‘peak period’.

The environmental benefits are significant, with a 663,000-tonne reduction in greenhouse gas emissions over 30 years through the reduced dependence on cars and buses. Light rail also uses 10 times less energy than a car per passenger per kilometre.

The South East bus network changes to accompany the introduction of light rail. The light rail has been designed to complement bus services, not replace them, and some express, all-stops and cross-city services continue to operate.

Testing and driver training have been taking place over the past months, with the red trams quickly becoming a familiar part of the landscape around campus. Transport for NSW has awareness campaigns in place to educate drivers, cyclists and pedestrians on safety around light rail.

Pedestrians have been urged to be vigilant and to keep their eyes up while walking around light rail tracks. An NSW report from July this year noted that more than one-third of pedestrians crossed busy roads while looking down at their phones or wearing headphones. With the increasing frequency of trams around the UNSW campus coming into summer, new safety campaigns aim to ensure everyone is vigilant while walking, riding or driving near tracks.

Since the Sydney trams stopped their operations almost 60 years ago, a lot has changed at UNSW. When the last tram pulled into the sheds, the university was a fledgling institution with a small contingent of students. Today there are almost 65,000 students and more than 6800 staff. The addition of light rail as a transport option is a significant step in the connection of the campus to the wider Sydney community.

While they may not look much like the trams that trundled down Anzac Parade in the first half of the 20th century, the new light rail is sure to have just as big an impact on the culture and the psyche of the city.
The new Dean of Medicine’s road to UNSW almost took a very different turn, writes Lucy Carroll.

I was an eleventh-hour change of university preference that led Vlado Perkovic to a career in medicine. That change would eventually see him become one of Australia’s top kidney disease specialists, leading some of the world’s largest clinical trials in the treatment and prevention of kidney failure and its many complications.

The pivotal application switch to study medicine led to a quick succession of achievements: a Bachelor’s degree; specialist training and a PhD from the University of Melbourne; positions as a nephrologist and general physician at some of Australia’s leading hospitals; and leader of large-scale clinical trials at major medical institutes.

Now, after more than two decades in research and leadership positions at The George Institute for Global Health, Professor Perkovic has started as Dean of Medicine.

He succeeds Professor Rodney Phillips, who moves to the new role of Pro Vice-Chancellor, Health within the Division of Enterprise, after four and a half years leading the faculty.

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF MEDICINE

“I’ve been taking opportunities as they appear through my career, but I never thought I’d be a doctor, never thought I’d specialise. I never thought I’d do research. I certainly never thought I’d be in the position of Dean,” says Professor Perkovic.

UNSW Medicine is ready to shape not only the future of medicine in Australia but also the healthcare system and professionals that provide it, he says.

The faculty seeks to answer some big questions, including what doctors will be doing 10, 20, 30 years from now, what sort of skills will they need and what expertise will they need.

Professor Perkovic says the course being delivered at UNSW is extraordinary, but there are opportunities to more keenly anticipate the changes ahead.

“This is a challenging and exciting time to take on the role of Dean,” he says. “The role will offer many opportunities to make a difference to people’s health and how we train the doctors of the future. Some of the massive global challenges that we’re facing in health and in education – from the epidemic of obesity to the ability to learn.”

EARLY YEARS

Professor Perkovic was born in Brinje, Croatia and his family left Europe in the late 1960s, moving to Australia before he turned one.

“My parents left Croatia as refugees and eventually ended up in the north-western suburbs of Melbourne. I lived and went to school in St Albans and Sydenham, which were very rough places in many ways back then, but extremely diverse as well. At the local schools, people born in Australia were a minority and I didn’t speak English until I started kindergarten. I spent a couple of years at a local high school before my parents moved me to a regional Catholic college that was more academically focused. It really helped me understand the importance of environment to the ability to learn.”

By the time he reached the HSC, Professor Perkovic had improved his marks and he started to think about what he wanted to study at university. His strongest subjects were science and maths. After graduating high school, he applied to do a combined Science/Law degree.

But at the last-minute, he changed his mind.

“I didn’t know anyone who was in medicine, and the only contact I had with the medical profession was occasional trips to the local GP,” he says. “I’ve always loved science, but I also enjoy the human element, the personal connection. How science affects people’s lives. And I realised that a career in medicine would give me a combination of the two.”

THE TREATMENT OF KIDNEY DISEASE

After training as a general physician in internal medicine and specialising in nephrology at Royal Melbourne Hospital – “I loved hospital pace, but it was long hours and constant on call” – Professor Perkovic was pulled toward a career in medical research. He has since published more than 200 peer-reviewed papers, which have produced major findings identifying better ways to prevent and treat kidney disease, including multiple clinical trials and meta-analyses.

“Specialising in kidney disease gave me a chance to make a real difference to patients’ lives. It is a rare area of medicine where people can be incredibly sick, with terrible quality of life, and after a kidney transplant, they just come alive. It’s incredible to be part of, and something I still really enjoy.”

After his PhD in 2005, he moved from Melbourne to Sydney to take a senior position at The George Institute and lead international trials that have made fundamental advances in the field and changed global treatment guidelines for kidney disease. He was appointed Executive Director of The George Institute and Professor of Medicine at the University of Sydney in 2012, Professor of Medicine at UNSW in 2017 and played a central role in developing an affordable dialysis system, which was a Eureka Prize Finalist in 2017. Leading the 2019 CREEDENCE trial, an international study that discovered a treatment that reduced kidney failure rates by a third, was one of the highlights of his career, he says.

“Clinical trials are the best way of proving what works in medicine. Being a part of a trial that is lifesaving for millions of people around the world has been a privilege. It really helped me develop a leadership role globally – suddenly we could achieve benefits that were beyond my wildest hopes.”

IMPROVING HEALTH GLOBALLY

President and Vice-Chancellor of UNSW Sydney, Professor Ian Jacobs, congratulated Professor Perkovic on his new appointment and highlighted his breadth of experience in leadership roles.

“Professor Perkovic is one of the nation’s top kidney disease experts and a leader in translating high impact research into outcomes for patients that have had a major effect on the lives of people around the world,” Professor Jacobs said.

“Having successfully led the Sydney hub of our partner The George Institute, which is one of Australia’s largest medical research institutes, Professor Perkovic will bring enormous experience to his role as Dean. He will bring expertise and ambition for the faculty during Professor Perkovic’s time as Dean as we shape the faculty and University to play a prominent role in addressing global, national and local healthcare challenges.”

Professor Jacobs acknowledged the quality of the work of former dean Professor Phillips in leading the faculty for almost five years.

“UNSW Medicine is one of the world’s top medical faculties and our students, clinicians and researchers have prepared under Professor Phillips’ leadership. I am grateful to Professor Phillips for his stellar contribution which includes bringing the George Institute for Global Health into the University and assisting with our Randwick Health and Education Precinct. I am delighted that he will continue at UNSW in the role of PVC Health with particular responsibility for the new precinct.”

UNSW Magazine
THE YEAR WE CHOOSE OUR FUTURE

Microrecycling trailblazer Veena Sahajwalla says 2020 will be a defining time in our battle to reduce waste, writes Stuart Snell.

The year 2019 has been a hectic and successful one for Professor Veena Sahajwalla and her UNSW Centre for Sustainable Materials Technology and Research (SMaRT).

But that doesn’t mean 2020 is going to be an easy one. In fact, the successes this year point to an even busier year to come. And the opportunity is significant not just for UNSW, but society more broadly.

Professor Sahajwalla and her SMaRT Centre team are pioneering what they call ‘microrecycling science’, and are aiming to realize we were claiming a lot more recycling than was actually happening and that something urgently needed to be done.

Professor Sahajwalla says we need innovative, new ways to deal with our unwanted materials. And she is not talking about burning them for energy, because this merely destroys the materials and their value forever.

All Australian governments signed an agreement recently to ban the exportation of four key waste streams: plastics, glass, paper and rubber tyres. This has spurred all levels of government to think hard about how to shift from offshoring much of our non-perishable waste without creating more and more landfill.

Professor Sahajwalla sees greater commercialisation of existing Microfactorie technology as key to helping address the waste crisis and boost manufacturing.

Current Microfactorie capability can convert the materials from electronic waste into valuable filament for 3D printing and into valuable products. And so the Microfactorie adds value to a stream to produce value-added materials which can then feed into different industrial supply chains for manufacturing products.

What is a Microfactorie?

Microfactorie is a small-scale, decentralised Microfactory that can enable communities to produce many of the products, materials and resources they need locally by using resources largely derived from waste.

The commercial scale Microfactorie at UNSW currently converts discarded glass, textiles and plastics into engineered, hybrid ceramic materials.

Based on the foundation of microrecycling, Microfactories are created to transform waste into sustainable materials and products, including where waste is not recycled in the traditional manner.

The future of global manufacturing lies in small-scale, decentralised Microfactories that will enable communities to produce many of the products, materials and resources they need locally by using resources largely derived from waste.

This emerging industrial revolution will profoundly disrupt today’s centralised, vertically integrated model of production. For example, silica from e-waste and carbon from end-of-life car tyres can make industrial grade nanoscale silicon carbide for industry use through silicon recycling.

With new technology to transform waste into sustainable materials and products, creating new local manufacturing capabilities, today’s model of mining finite virgin raw materials in far-flung locations and centralised materials processing will seem inconceivably unsustainable.

Economies of scale will always exist and have a role but Professor Sahajwalla talks about new ‘economies of purpose’ which aim to achieve sustainable outcomes where the opportunity cost to the environment of inaction is greater than the appetite of society to consume.

The science and technology of Microfactories makes it possible for a complicated waste stream to produce value-added materials which can then feed into different industrial supply chains for manufacturing products.

Microfactorie converts waste into engineered materials that can be used to make items such as this dining table and side table.

Economies of scale will always exist and have a role but Professor Sahajwalla talks about new ‘economies of purpose’ which aim to achieve sustainable outcomes where the opportunity cost to the environment of inaction is greater than the appetite of society to consume.

The science and technology of Microfactories makes it possible for a complicated waste stream to produce value-added materials which can then feed into different industrial supply chains for manufacturing products.

Microfactorie converts waste into engineered materials that can be used to make items such as this dining table and side table.

In partnership with researchers, industry, and governments, NSW Circular aims to help create pathways to markets, and foster innovation through a more sustainable approach to design and production, use of resources and recycling of unwanted materials.

Professor Sahajwalla’s ambition is to ensure a greater level of sustainability in society and she sees 2020 as a tipping point.

“The focus on waste and recycling kicked up earlier this year after China banned countries from sending their unwanted materials there,” Professor Sahajwalla says.

“Suddenly, other countries across South-East Asia started these bans too this year, because they realised the materials often just ended up rotting in piles and creating a mess.

“Policymakers here at home started to realise we were claiming a lot more recyclable than was actually happening and that something urgently needed to be done.”

Professor Sahajwalla says we need innovative, new ways to deal with our unwanted materials. And she is not talking about burning them for energy, because this merely destroys the materials and their value forever.

All Australian governments signed an agreement recently to ban the exportation of four key waste streams: plastics, glass, paper and rubber tyres. This has spurred all levels of government to think hard about how to shift from offshoring much of our non-perishable waste without creating more and more landfill.

Professor Sahajwalla sees greater commercialisation of existing Microfactorie technology as key to helping address the waste crisis and boost manufacturing.

Current Microfactorie capability can convert the materials from electronic waste into valuable filament for 3D printing and into valuable metal alloys. It can also turn discarded textiles, glass and plastics into engineered, hybrid ceramic materials.

“We are doubling down on developing our microrecycling science and advanced manufacturing technology and capability so more waste materials can be reformed into value-added materials and kept out of landfill,” Professor Sahajwalla says.

“Microfactories can be located wherever waste is stockpiled, including in rural and regional areas. Ultimately, apart from the environmental benefits, this scientifically developed technology helps develop the emerging circular economy.”

The ultimate aim with this technology is to create jobs and enhance social and economic outcomes not just for local communities but more broadly as a nation because it contributes to new supply chains, in addition to helping to solve our immediate waste challenges.”

McEwan Circular

Veena Sahajwalla is directing the new NSW Circular Economy Innovation Network at the request of the state government.

Hosted by UNSW, the Network has been developing and running a series of stakeholder events and workshops to support the transition to a circular economy.

A circular economy values resources by keeping products and materials in use for as long as possible. It is ‘circular’ because unwanted materials and items get repurposed, reused or reformed in some way.

In a linear economy, things get made, used and disposed of. In partnership with researchers, industry, and governments, NSW Circular aims to help create pathways to markets, and foster innovation through a more sustainable approach to design and production, use of resources and recycling of unwanted materials.

The Microfactorie converts waste into engineered materials that can be used to make items such as this dining table and side table.
Between

a rock

Plans for a new home in a more friendly climate are a lifeline for the critically endangered mountain pygmy-possum, writes Lechlan Gilbert.

A plan to save the mountain pygmy-possum by taking them from their alpine habitat to a warmer, lowland rainforest environment is inspired by fossil evidence up to 25 million years old. In a study published in Royal Society’s Philosophical Transactions B, researchers argue that the mountain pygmy-possum (Burramys parvus) is a species living on the fringes of what its biological ancestors would have enjoyed as a more temperate, less extreme environment. And with the clock ticking on Burramys’ future, the authors, including scientists from UNSW’s School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences (BEES), have started a breeding program in Lithgow, NSW, in a bid to acclimatise the diminutive possums to more hospitable, lowland surroundings. UNSW Professor Mike Archer, a palaeontologist who has led research into the Riversleigh fossil deposits since 1976, says the mountain pygmy-possum is one of the species most vulnerable to climate change in Australia, and faces extinction if alpine snowfalls continue to decline as climate modelling predicts.

“These possums are one of the few mammals in Australia that hibernate during the winter,” he says. “They hibernate in deep within humid rock piles. Snow cover on these rock piles provides critically important insulation from the cold. The rock piles also provide shelter in summer.”

Field research into how these possums have survived the extreme alpine conditions was long carried out by Dr Linda Browsse and more recently Dr Hayley Bates, co-authors on the published paper. “To hibernate successfully, they need temperatures to hover between 1.5 and 2.5 degrees Celsius,” says Dr Bates, Associate Lecturer at BEES. “But if there isn’t enough snowfall, or snow melts early because of a warming or drying event, the outside cold air will penetrate the rocks. Anything less than 0.6 degrees will wake them from their hibernation and they can shiver and starve to death. You just need two bad winters like this and the species could collapse.”

It is estimated there are no more than 2500 Burramys living in alpine regions of NSW and Victoria. But rather than be gloomy about the future for the Burramys, Professor Archer is inspired by the fossil record to suggest a way to avoid extinction.

“The fossil record for all other species in the genus Burramys indicates that their current habitat is a far cry from their comfort zone for the last 25 million years,” he says. “All previous populations thrived in cool temperate lowland rainforest communities—not the alpine one.”

Professor Archer thinks that the mountain pygmy-possum, which was first discovered as a living animal in 1966, has been mummified in a less-than-ideal alpine environment where it has been forced to use strategies such as hibernation to survive.

“What probably happened is that the modern species followed cool rainforest which invaded the alpine areas during a period of relatively warmer, lush conditions. After these conditions deteriorated with further climate change, they were stranded in an environment that was at the extreme end of their adaptability.”

Professor Archer and his colleagues at UNSW, University of Sydney, University of New England and various local and international environmental organisations hatched the plan to establish a colony in lowland areas of dense forest. There are now two breeding pairs in Secret Creek Sanctuary at Lithgow which are being maintained in temperatures commensurate to the forest. The group is aiming to start the colony with about 25 individuals. Other threatened animals including the Corroboree frog and swamp tortoise (Pseudemydura umbrina) could be rescued in the same way.

More attention needs to be paid to fossil evidence when developing conservation strategies, Professor Archer says. “It’s not unusual for endangered species to be occupying the ‘extreme’ edges of a once much wider habitat. Giant pandas, for example, were once widespread over lowland areas but, because of agriculture, have long since been confined to mountainous areas.

“Understanding former distributions, even way back in time, can provide new insights into translocation strategies that might work for species otherwise threatened in the extreme edges of their once much wider distribution.”

REBEL

WILL AM

A CAUSE

The comedy star, who graduated from UNSW in 2009 with a double degree in law and arts, returned to campus to a keen audience, writes Lorissa Mavros.

Professional commitments stopped actress, writer and producer Rebel Wilson from attending the UNSW Alumni Awards in May. At the time she accepted the 2019 Chancellor’s Award for Exceptional Alumni Achievement award in a video message and acknowledged the recognition via social media.

But she made good on her promise to visit the campus when she returned to Australia, participating in an event dedicated to about 120 students from UNSW Law and the Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences.

During her conversation with UNSW Law Dean Professor George Williams AO, the star of Pitch Perfect and Bridesmaids reminisced about commuting two-and-half-hours by bus from her family home in north-western Sydney and sleeping in class.

Although she was an accomplished stage and television actress before she arrived at UNSW, Ms Wilson said she was determined to complete her double degree in law and arts.

“People would say, ‘why are you still doing this? You’re on TV,’” she said. “‘The television industry is very volatile, and you don’t know what’s going to happen. And I worked [really hard] in high school to get into university, so I couldn’t just waste that.’”

Ms Wilson encouraged students “to create a vision for what you want to do and go after it.”

“If you are well-educated, you can have the most opportunity,” she said. “Even though it was very difficult for me to finish my degree over a long period of time, it is good because in some ways you don’t know how it is going to come back and help you. But if you finish, it can be really invaluable.”

Since graduating in 2009, Ms Wilson has become one of Hollywood’s most sought-after entertainers. Still, she has used her law degree on several occasions to negotiate contracts (she said the deal for Pitch Perfect 3 was “very good”), claim ownership of characters she has played on film and television and contract directly with a television network.

Most recently, she started opposite Anne Hathaway in The Hustle, which the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) initially gave an “R” rating. She used her legal skills to take the matter to arbitration and won, securing a “PG-13” rating and making the film more accessible to a wider audience.

“I’ve saved a lot on lawyer fees,” she joked. Ms Wilson has regularly praised UNSW and the education she received. Last year, she wore a UNSW T-shirt to a US College Signing Day party with Michelle Obama to celebrate the pursuit of a university education.

Ms Wilson recently starred as the lead in Isn’t It Romantic, which she produced under her production banner, Camp Sugar. She also stars in Taika Waititi’s dark comedy Jojo Rabbit, and in Tom Hooper’s big screen adaptation of Andrew Lloyd Webber’s acclaimed musical Cats.

Off screen, Ms Wilson has her own clothing line, Rebel Wilson X Angels, and is a long-term supporter of the School of St Jude in Tanzania, which fights poverty through education.
The thoughts that count

An unexpected notion put Kaarin Anstey on the path to a new career researching how our minds age, writes Ivy Shih.

For Hudson Berry, sport and medicine is the perfect combination, writes Megan Maurice.

An unexpected notion put Kaarin Anstey on the path to a new career researching how our minds age, writes Ivy Shih.

“I think good, productive collaboration requires communication that forces you to set aside your own discipline and ways of thinking.”

— Kaarin Anstey

When you do a survey, usually there is a box that says 70 years and older. But with an ageing population, there are more people that live into their 90s and actually we don’t know a lot about that — that’s the new frontier.”

— Professor Anstey

“You are involved in different fields it gives you new ideas and ways of tackling a problem in ways you hadn’t even thought of,” says Professor Anstey.

“Cognition is really at the core of who we are,” says Professor Anstey.

Ivy Shih

Hudson Berry is all about keeping his options open. The teenager is currently pursuing pathways in both the Sevens and 15s formats of rugby, while also in his first year of Medicine at UNSW Sydney.

While any one of these career paths would be time-consuming on their own, Mr Berry has been relishing the challenge of combining sport and study.

“In a sport where so many things can go wrong, injuries or even one coach who doesn’t select you, you need something to fall back on,” he says.

“But it’s also such an important thing to have something else to do. I think a lot of people play footy or they follow their degree and they lose track of other things in life.

“I think it’s really important to have an outlet of some sort. And in a way, medicine and rugby have been an outlet for each other.”

Mr Berry’s breakthrough moment this year was his inclusion in the Dream Big Time program run by Rugby Australia for talented young Indigenous players.

The three-day camp in Sydney in August was attended by 133 scouted players from across the country, from which two squads of 20 were picked. Mr Berry was excited to be one of the selected players.

“I was playing at Randwick this season — which was also through UNSW,” he says.

“And one of my mates there was also doing it. I just thought, why not go down there and give it a shot? It’s all worked out pretty well.”

UNSW Sports Advisory Council and Randwick Rugby Council member Simon Poidevin has been extremely impressed with the youngster this year.

“Hudson was recruited to join the Randwick Rugby Colts program earlier this year and has grabbed the opportunity with gusto,” Mr Poidevin says.

“Hudson has been a rookie in our Third Grade Colts, learning the game and the club quickly realised his amazing talent, moving him onto the wing of our highly successful First Grade Colts team. Along the way Hudson was invited to join our Rohrig Elite Development Program at Randwick.”

As for his ambitions in medicine, Mr Berry is aware that he is only at the beginning of a very long journey with his studies.

“Visibly I have a long time to go, so my goals will change as I go on,” he says.

“But I think for me, a really good option will be doing some kind of sports medicine. It merges two of the things that I love most and I couldn’t think of a much better way to pick a profession.”

Mr Berry credits UNSW’s Nura Gillis Pre-Program for giving him the opportunity to study Medicine. “Medicine is something I’ve always dreamt of, but I didn’t get the ATAR,” he says.

“So I was planning on doing Medical Science and then doing post-grad afterwards, but UNSW gave me a pathway to do it straight away.”

While the path Mr Berry has chosen to take won’t be easy, his determination and drive will go a long way to ensuring his success in all his chosen fields. Balancing high-level sport with a degree in Medicine isn’t for the faint-hearted but Mr Berry is up to the challenge.

“It’s difficult, but I really enjoy it,” he says.

“It just comes down to managing my time really effectively.”

Randwick Rugby Council member Simon Poidevin

Megan Maurice

“I think it’s really important to have an outlet of some sort. And in a way, medicine and rugby have been an outlet for each other.”

— Mr Berry

“It’s such an important thing to have something else to do” Hudson Berry is working hard on and off the field.

Photo: Randwick Rugby

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Medicine for the soul

Photo: Hudson Berry

It’s such an important thing to have something else to do” Hudson Berry is working hard on and off the field.

Photo: Randwick Rugby

Medicine for the soul

For Hudson Berry, sport and medicine is the perfect combination, writes Megan Maurice.

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BEWARE THE FAME GAME

“Dynamic this is complicated, however, by unprecedented rises in the celebritisation of ‘ordinary’ people via the internet and media genres such as reality television,” she says.

“Directing vitriol at these sorts of ‘amateur’ or ‘accidental’ celebrities raises different ethical issues because it is likely that such people are more psychologically physically and financially vulnerable to hate campaigns than seasoned celebrities.”

Risks for young athletes

For athletes social media can open doors – but it also brings risks. UNSW Law and Psychology student Matilda McDonell, who plays for the Giants in the Suncorp Super Rugby, says there is no easy out.

“we uphold the club values of respect and dedication to our codes. So that means no photos of drinking and [making sure we wear] appropriate clothing,” she says.

The (even) darker side of social media fame

Potentially the biggest danger comes from the skullers of social media known as trolls. When Channel 7 posted a photo of AFLW star Tayla Harris and her famous kicking action on Facebook, the trolls came out in force. From sexually explicit comments, to ones degrading her ability, to those masking their misogyny with concern for her welfare, the photo was flooded with comments.

“The Harris furio highlighted a particular kind of criticism levelled at female athletes.

“Women are attacked online for being either too normatively ‘sexy’ or not normatively ‘sexy’ enough,” Dr Jane says.

“Consider, too, the fact that the most common insult aimed a woman online is to call her some variation of fat, ugly and slutty. Men simply aren’t judged by their appearances and sexual activity the way women are.”

Finding a solution

Dr Jane says tech giants aren’t helping the situation, and policy makers are making matters worse by rushing through poorly considered measures.

“Finding a solution is not to arm herself against potential abuse is not to engage with it. ‘We just get told not to read it all,’ she says. ‘There’s no point in getting into stuff that isn’t even accurate and makes you feel down about yourself or teammates.’

Social media can be really negative sometimes if we lose a match, because people are trying to analyse what and where it went wrong. Unfortunately, some players do read it, especially younger ones, and it really affects self-esteem. Best advice is to just not even go there.”

Sex workers say the number of Australian women buying sex is on the rise, but society’s view with this concept? Possibly not, says a new study. The research by Dr Hilary Caldwell, UNSW Visiting Fellow at the Centre for Social Research in Health, reveals that there’s still a collective reluctance to accept that women visit escorts.

Dr Caldwell says that, until now, there has been very little empirical evidence of women buying sex outside of female sex tourism. It is only recently that journalists and researchers have inquired about women buying sex, raising questions about female sexual agency (a woman’s ability to act on her sexual needs, desires and wishes) and what it means to be a woman in a postfeminist era.

“Prior to the 1950s, buying sex was an expected male pastime and has since been systematically demonised by campaigners who consider female sex workers to be degraded, damaged goods, and exploited victims of men. A basic idea that sex diminishes a woman is profoundly sexist and it means to be a woman in a postfeminist era.

“Some stressed that buying sex was ‘therapy’ for underlying conditions including healing from abuse, depression and stress, and vaginismus (which causes spasms in the pelvic floor). Other reasons includes wanting ‘to get off’, ‘to be indulged’, and to feel safe with a professional who would respect boundaries and consent.

“Women overwhelmingly felt the services received were beneficial, boosting self-esteem and mental health. ‘They spoke about learning about specific aspects of their bodies, and their sexuality which they felt gave them more power to negotiate future sexual encounters,’” says Dr Caldwell.

Participants did extensive research before buying sex and felt safer buying sexual services than “hooking up”, but they recognised the potential for male escorts to prey on naive female customers.

The sex workers interviewed said the female market was increasing, but felt society wished to silence women who bought sex to control female sexuality and desire, and to maintain the status quo regarding dominant narratives of male clientele as violent.

Some stressed that buying sex was not necessarily an indulgence and that “women’s mental and physical health is well served by being able to access sex workers”.

Participants in Dr Caldwell’s study called for clients to be consulted during public inquiries into sex laws, and expressed concern about their activities becoming criminalised.

Dr Caldwell says: “One sex buyer said she feels ‘like a really strong feminist but there are other women out there who are going to shame me around this. They are pushing my story underground’. Decriminalisation of buying and selling sex would be an appropriate outcome to acknowledge the benefits of sexual services to society.”

She says that we need to broaden the debate about the sex industry beyond a singular view of immorality or entitlement and include women as consumers to move towards gendered equality and acknowledge female sexual agency.
Robotic furniture can transform a room in seconds, but how connected will we be with homes that change around us?

By Christian Tietz.

The Ori Cloud Bed is lifted and lowered from a ceiling recess to create space that doubles as bedroom and living room.

Don’t box me

Robotic furniture can transform a room in seconds, but how connected will we be with homes that change around us?

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And mobile furniture is not a new idea. The late 1980s and early 1990s saw whole ranges, from tables on wheels to sideboards with castors. The idea of being able to transform our living space made these mobile furnishings enticing. But the manual actions required meant that, after a few initial experiments, they ended up in one static position – integrated and firmly located within the accumulations of things that make up our private sphere and who we are.

Industrial designers such as the late Luigi Colani designed pre-manufactured dwellings with rotating interiors – but the ease of transformation is what really makes a difference now. Rooms will transform from bedroom into living room or from study into entertainment space at the touch of a button, a gesture, or a voice command.

Robotically optimised homes might change culture, just as digital communications altered our conversations, social conduct, personal relationships and behaviour.

How buildings are designed and developed will change entirely. This has the potential to have a massive and disruptive impact on real estate development, building design and regulation, construction methods, housing and social policy.

This article is reproduced from The Conversation (theconversation.com).

Christian Tietz is a Senior Lecturer in Industrial Design at UNSW Built Environment.

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Addressing Modern Slavery

Addressing Modern Slavery examines how we all can help eradicate one of the big challenges of our time, writes Emi Berry.

Most Australians believe slavery is an outdated concept. But it’s estimated that 40 million people are enslaved around the world, more than ever before in human history. And it is not only a problem overseas. The Global Slavery Index estimates 15,000 people were living in modern slavery in Australia in 2018. 

“Almost everything that you would use in a day is linked to modern slavery,” Associate Professor Justine Nolan from UNSW Law says. 

The coffee you have, the fish you buy for dinner, the clothes you wear and the carpet in your house. All of these products are made in ways that contribute to high-risk modern slavery activities.”

WHAT IS MODERN SLAVERY?

Modern slavery can include several exploitative practices such as forced labour, deceptive recruitment for labour, servitude, trafficking in persons, bonded or indebted labour, forced marriage, child marriage and organ trafficking. In their new book Addressing Modern Slavery, Associate Professor Nolan and co-author Dr Martijn Boersma (UTS) explore the problem and examine how consumers, businesses and governments can help eradicate it.

In 2017, a Sydney-based cleaning firm provided services to Bunnings, Wilson Parking and NSW Ambulance and was fined $170,000 for exploiting 49 cleaners. The firm was also ordered to backpay more than $500,000. Sadly, this is not an isolated case.

DOES CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY HELP?

Many companies have made public commitments to modern slavery. But there is still some scepticism that these policies will make much difference.

“Companies say they are aware of modern slavery and understand what it is. But not many companies have the capacity to address exploitation, their capacity to hold companies to account is often limited compared to governments,” Dr Boersma says.

The book also explores the growth of self-regulation in the corporate world and the rise of multi-stakeholder initiatives, which include companies, civil society organisations such as trade unions, non-government organisations and sometimes governments. Although these initiatives can sometimes help address exploitation, their capacity to hold companies to account is often limited compared to enforcement by the state.

The authors caution there is no magic bullet to end modern slavery, saying “If we make the mistake of looking for a single cure and neglect to confront modern slavery on multiple fronts, we end up treating the symptoms of modern slavery rather than dealing with its root causes.”

Cosmic Chronicles – A User’s Guide to the Universe

Fred Watson (NewSouth Publishing)

• Are we alone in the universe? Where did the moon come from? Could there really be a future in asteroid mining? In Cosmic Chronicles, Fred Watson – Australia’s Astronomer-at-Large and bestselling author – explores the hottest topics in space science and astronomy. From the beginning space economy, to discussing the possibility of a ninth planet in the far reaches of the solar system, and sharing the power of citizen science, he has long been a champion of making stories of ground-breaking science accessible. In this book he shares the less well-known stories from the frontiers of astronomy and space science.

The Memory Pool

Thea Sprach (NewSouth Publishing)

• Smell the chlorine, taste the hot chips and feel the beat of the music as you read these stories of Australian childhoods at the pool. This delightful, heart-warming series of recollections about the swimming pools of childhood from Australians including Trent Dalton, Leah Purcell, Shane Gould, Brawney and Memeh Chibi, to the woman who has ever dived into their local Olympic pool, bush waterhole or submariner balls will want to summon themselves in this beautiful book. Author Therese Sprach is a Sydney-based photographer, journalist, freelance writer and swimmer.

Frank & Fearless

Nicholas Cowdery (NewSouth Publishing)

• “When I walked through the office door each day, I knew that almost every decision I made would make someone sad.” Frank & Fearless is a gripping and forthright account of some of the toughest cases faced by Nicholas Cowdery AM QC, now a UNSW visiting professorial fellow, during his time as Director of Public Prosecutions for New South Wales. The headline-grabbing criminal trials of Gordon Wood, Keli Lane and Jeffrey Gilham are examined with forensic precision, along with the DPP’s contentious decision not to prosecute artist Bill Henson and mental health and the law.

The Best Australian Science Writing 2019

Edited by Bianca Nogrady, foreword by Lisa Harvey-Smith (NewSouth Publishing)

• Good science writing makes you feel. It makes you think. It makes you laugh at the image of aliens puzzling over golf balls on the Moon, wonder at the mystery of the Spanish influenza’s deadly cache campaign, grow for baby chickens dying with plastic-filled stomachs, rage at the loss of the Great Barrier Reef and cheer for the cIborg’s long overdue scientific debut. This ninth edition of The Best Australian Science Writing showcases the most brilliant, most powerful, colourful and insightful news, feature, essay and poetry writing from Australian writers and scientists.

The Cure For Hate: A Former White Supremacist’s Journey From Violent Extremism To Radical Compassion

Dr Tony McLean (NewSouth Books)

• The Cure For Hate demonstrates that in a society divided by the need of healing, abhorrence, forgiveness and radical compassion are the cure. Dr Tony McLean found an outlet for his teenage rage in the street violence of the skinhead scene and was deeply involved in the White Aryan Resistance until the following of outlaw he left at the birth of his children inspired him to start questioning his hateful beliefs. He is now the chair of Life After Hate, a US non-profit that offers a place of refuge and support for those who wish to leave hate groups.

Australian Modern Architectures in History

Henry Maguire (NewSouth Books)

• Federation in 1901 marked the beginning of a search for a style and better buildings to accommodate the realities of Australian life and express an emerging national identity. This highly illustrated book covers the flowering of these many variants, from the bid to create a model city in Canberra, through the stylistic burst of the 1920s, to the postmodern idealism of postwar reconstruction and beyond. It reveals a vibrant and influential culture, at its best when it matches a civic idealism with the sensuality of a country of stunning light and landscapes. Harry Margalit is an associate professor at UNSW Sydney.

This Is Depression: A Comprehensive, Compassionate Guide For Anyone With Depression Or Mental Illness

Dr Diane McIntosh (NewSouth Books)

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Cooking With The Oldest Foods On Earth: Australian Native Foods, Recipes And Sources

John Newton (NewSouth Publishing)

• Australian native produce is booming. Native ingredients are beginning to turn up in grazers’ menus, with ‘native’ cooking, from Warrigal greens and saltbush, to kangaroo and yabbies – food that they say ‘is in its original habitat and ready to take it home. This short companion book to the award- winning The Oldest Foods on Earth shows you how to cook with Australian ingredients, where to find them and how to grow them. Organised by ingredient, each chapter is packed with stories, a practical guide, and recipes that promise to broaden Australians’ culinary horizons in every way.
“I think we need more voices in the public square when something sexist happens to a female leader, and I think it’s important that a number of those voices are male.”

Julia Gillard
Former Prime Minister of Australia
Speaking at the UNSW Centre for Ideas event, Women & Leadership.

Listen to the full talk at centreforideas.com