

uniken

Thinking outside the square: introducing the cross-faculty professors

- Unravelling a child cancer mystery
- The ideas man: Martin Krygier
- Don't blame Voltaire



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Group of Eight

From the Vice-Chancellor



Research students are among the most valuable assets of any university. It is critical that we have the capacity to attract the best and brightest, and to ensure that their time here is both productive and rewarding.

One of my most cherished ambitions has been to establish a Graduate Research School at UNSW. For various reasons, progress on the project has proved difficult – but I am pleased to say it is finally about to become reality.

After months of intensive preparation, the school will be formally opened on 23 September. Housed in the Rupert Myers building, and under the leadership of Professor Margaret Harding as our first Dean of Graduate Research, it will provide a one-stop shop for UNSW's postgraduate research students.

The school will bring under the one roof the full range of services required to support the students and their supervisors – from information on scholarship and career opportunities to assistance with thesis submissions and skills training. And its location is significant. The Myers building, which already houses Research Services and NewSouth Innovations, is set to become the focus of research and innovation at the University: the centre of a dedicated research precinct. The aim is not only to provide better services to our postgraduate research students, but also to integrate them more fully into the UNSW research community.

Dedicated study space

In addition, we are redeveloping and expanding dedicated study space for postgraduate research students around the University, with almost 150 new spaces opening up this year and next, including 65 in the library.

In assessing how best to meet the needs of our research students, we have been able to reap the benefit of experience elsewhere. Once again our Go8 alliance proved to be valuable: the Deans of the Graduate Research Schools at Monash, Queensland and Melbourne were particularly helpful.

I take this opportunity to again welcome Professor Harding to the University. She comes to us from the University of Sydney, where she was Professor of Chemistry, and a former Associate Dean for Postgraduate Research. Margaret is recognised for her academic leadership in postgraduate research training, and for outstanding supervision of research students, as well as the quality of her own research. We are indeed fortunate to have secured someone of her calibre to lead this important initiative.

The next major imperative is to develop on-campus housing for postgraduate research students. We hope to announce plans within the year. ♦

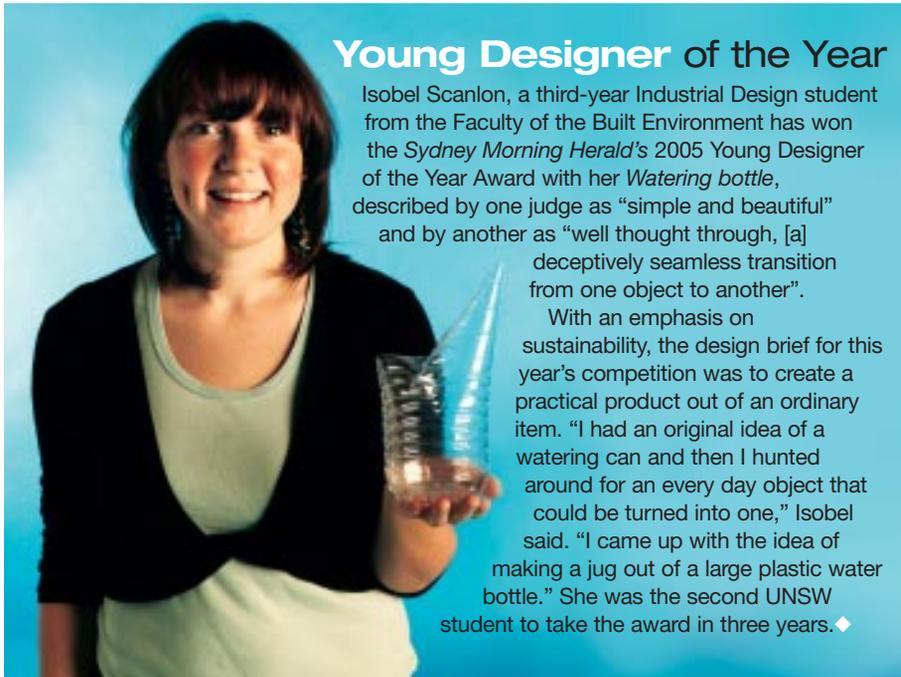
Mark Wainwright

Great Engineering Challenge

The student-run Great Engineering Challenge, held as part of National Engineering Week, took place last month at the Squarehouse. More than 100 year 10 and 11 students participated in a design-and-build competition on the theme of disaster relief. One challenge was to design an energy dissipation mechanism, or crushing device, to cushion the base of a box of urgent medical supplies dropped in an earthquake zone. The second challenge was to lift up a communications tower that has fallen over in the aftershocks of the earthquake, using the principles of mechanical advantage.



Organiser and engineering student Andrew Pratley said that the first challenge was based on a real-life situation. "This is actually a real problem," he said, "and I have both footage and a real-life container used in disaster relief from the RAAF." The second challenge was not based on a known situation but the student organisers had worked to make it convincing in terms of location and potential need. ♦



Young Designer of the Year

Isobel Scanlon, a third-year Industrial Design student from the Faculty of the Built Environment has won the *Sydney Morning Herald's* 2005 Young Designer of the Year Award with her *Watering bottle*, described by one judge as "simple and beautiful" and by another as "well thought through, [a]

deceptively seamless transition from one object to another".

With an emphasis on sustainability, the design brief for this year's competition was to create a practical product out of an ordinary item. "I had an original idea of a watering can and then I hunted around for an every day object that could be turned into one," Isobel said. "I came up with the idea of making a jug out of a large plastic water bottle." She was the second UNSW student to take the award in three years. ♦

Quentin Jones © Sydney Morning Herald

Smoking gun

In a world first, Australian researchers have found a toxin that plays an important role in the progression of Alzheimer's disease, the most common cause of dementia. The research, by two UNSW academics, is significant because drugs in development for other conditions might be able to be used to halt the progression of Alzheimer's. Professor Bruce Brew, Director of Neurology at St Vincent's Hospital, and Dr Gilles Guillemin of the Centre for Immunology at St Vincent's were part of a team including scientists from the University of Sydney and Hokkaido University which found that all the brains of dementia patients showed quinolinic acid neurotoxicity, which kills nerve cells in the brain. ♦

Bell sounds in Denmark

Professor Philip Bell, Head of the School of Media, Film and Theatre has been awarded a prestigious Erasmus Mundus scholarship. He will spend a month at Roskilde University in Denmark teaching a course on media semiotics and will also present papers considering current epistemological debates in media and cultural studies at other European universities, including Dijon and Florence.

The Erasmus consortium is a group of European universities that brings together high-level academic research within a particular field and fosters international exchange and dialogue between cultures. "Erasmus was a bit of a stirrer, so I think an Aussie voice in the European conversation may continue in his tradition," Professor Bell said.

"There is quite a lot of interest in Australia from Denmark and it's not all about Mary," Professor Bell said. "Many students come over to Australia on exchange and Australian studies has been taught there for some time, at the University of Copenhagen for instance." He will also present a paper on Australian television and 'Americanisation' at Copenhagen. ♦

Bright old brains just as good

The notion that memory falters with age has been dealt a blow by a new study showing that healthy, intelligent people in their 70s are just as good as 18 year olds at recalling material they have read. The fact that age made no difference was true, regardless of whether the subject matter was simple and familiar or complex and unfamiliar. "We found that the memory of older people aged 63 to 78 years was virtually the same as young adults aged 18 to 27 years in a series of reading recall tests," said psychology student Laura Haynes, who conducted the research for her honours thesis. "It seems reasonable to interpret these findings as another good reason for staying fit and healthy as you age: apart from the physical benefits, it would seem that you stay healthy in mind as well," said Ms Haynes, who has won a scholarship to Cambridge University. ♦

Burying the problem: geosequestration

Prominent alumnus and renowned Geoscience Australia geoscientist Dr John Bradshaw will give the 25th JJ Frankel Memorial lecture, titled *Burying the Problem: will geosequestration solve the challenge of increasing CO2 emissions?* on 21 September. The event is co-sponsored by the School of BEES and NSW Division of the Geological Society of Australia. This event, aimed at the non-specialist, honours UNSW's Foundation Professor of Geology, Joe Frankel. ♦

Photovoltaics: the \$2 million men

Professor Martin Green and Dr Gavin Conibeer have won a Stanford University Global Climate and Energy Project (GCEP) grant estimated at US\$2.37 million. Professor Green, of the Centre of Excellence for Advanced Silicon Photovoltaics and Photonics, and Dr Conibeer of the Centre for Photovoltaic Engineering will lead a team of ten researchers investigating nanostructured silicon-based tandem solar cells.

"This award allows us to explore a very original approach to solar energy conversion that uses abundant materials and little energy, but promises high performance and low costs," Professor Green said. ♦

International HIV project

UNSW is the lead agency in an international collaborative project bringing together Indigenous health researchers from Australia, Canada and New Zealand, to investigate prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS and other infections in their Indigenous communities. Professor John Kaldor, the deputy director of the National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research, will lead the five-year program.

The Australian team has been awarded \$1.7 million from the NHMRC and is a partnership made up of UNSW and three Aboriginal community-controlled health services: the Aboriginal Medical Service, Redfern; Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service in Perth and the Townsville Aboriginal and Islander Health Service. ♦

Taxing times with OECD

UNSW's taxation school, Atax, is to become the only Australasian institution in the OECD International Network for Tax Research, which includes universities such as Harvard, Cambridge, the Sorbonne, the National University of Singapore, the University of Hong Kong, and the University of Leiden. The network's steering group, which met for the first time in London last month, will drive research that will assist both OECD and non-OECD countries to formulate international and domestic tax policies.

"This is an exciting development for Atax," said director Professor Chris Evans. "It reflects our global leadership credentials in tax and will expand our contribution to international tax research and debate." ♦

For the record

We are not aware of our basic rights. That means we are not aware of when they are offended.

Professor George Williams, Gilbert + Tobin Centre of Public Law, on calls for the introduction of an Australian identity card – Sunday Telegraph

It is just not clear how *World Movies* and *Dateline* produce Islamic fundamentalists, at least any more so than *Desperate Housewives* and *Nightline*.

Dr Geoffrey Brahm Levey, School of Politics and International Relations, on a commentator's call to restrict Muslim immigration and to abolish SBS – The Australian

Few people have the deep pockets and the resilience of [Jodee] Rich to fight civil proceedings for four years or more.

Professor Paul Redmond, School of Law, on prosecutions by ASIC – Bulletin with Newsweek

[Climate change, urbanisation, water, energy and an ageing population:] all these things demand increasingly flexible and imaginative cross-disciplinary approaches.

NewSouth Global professor of design, Richard Hough – The Australian

People live in houses, not trees.

Bill Randolph, UNSW City Futures Research Centre, arguing that Bob Carr's most tangible legacy would be the unaffordability of Sydney housing – Sydney Morning Herald

Patients are often so keyed up during a visit to their doctor that they fail to pick up on all the advice being offered.

Professor Gavin Andrews, School of Psychiatry, on an internet-based information program he has developed for doctors to prescribe for their patients – Canberra Times

[The recent rise in cash advances on credit cards] could be an early sign that high levels of household debt are catching up with a critical mass of consumers who are relying on one of the most expensive forms of finance available.

Khaldoun Hajaj, Financial Services Consumer Policy Centre – The Age

I really thought [having flat feet] would prove to be a disadvantage so I was as surprised as anyone else.

Dara Twomey, School of Safety Science, whose research indicated that flat-footed people outperform people with 'normal' feet in some activities – Independent Weekly

I'm very comfortable that I did what was right... I gave it my best shot.

Former Vice-Chancellor Professor Rory Hume on events that led to his leaving UNSW – The Australian

Gareth Evans on terror: the Wallace Wurth lecture

Former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans will deliver the Wallace Wurth lecture later this month. His address is titled *Democracies, Rights and the Age of Terrorism*.

Mr Evans is head of the Brussels-based International Crisis Group (ICG), a position he has held for five years. The ICG is an independent non-governmental organisation that works, through field-based analysis and high-level policy advocacy, to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

Mr Evans was one of Australia's longest serving Foreign Ministers. Before his election to the Senate in 1978, he was an academic lawyer and barrister. He was a cabinet minister in the Hawke and Keating Labor Governments for thirteen years, in posts including Attorney-General and Foreign Minister. He was Australian Humanist of the Year in 1990, won the ANZAC Peace Prize in 1994 for his work on Cambodia and was made an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in 2001. He has published extensively in books, journal articles, newspaper and magazine articles on foreign relations, politics, human rights and legal reform.

The Wallace Wurth lecture will be given on 27 September at 6 pm in the Clancy Auditorium. The lecture series is named for Wallace Charles Wurth, the first President of the Council of the New South Wales University of Technology (as UNSW was then called) and the first Chancellor of the University.

The lecture series began in 1964 with the first lecture delivered by the then Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies. Other speakers have included Emeritus Professors Sir Phillip Baxter and John Passmore, Professors Judith Robinson-Valery, Hugh Stretton, Patrick Atiyah and Noam Chomsky, the Dalai Lama, Gerry Adams and José Ramos Horta. ♦

Bookings essential on rsvp@unsw.edu.au. More information from Rosie Wood on 9385 2355.

Across the spectrum: UNSW hosts Nobel laureate



Nobel laureate Professor Tanaka and BMSF students

UNSW's Bioanalytical Mass Spectrometry Facility recently hosted a visit from the 2002 Nobel laureate for chemistry. Professor Koichi Tanaka met with students and BMSF Director, Michael Guilhaus, with whom he shares an interest in the development of instrumentation in mass spectrometry. UNSW researchers who use mass spectrometry, from the faculties of Medicine and Science, and BMSF researchers joined Professor Tanaka for a discussion on the role and future of biological mass spectrometry, the challenges faced by universities in providing education and training in this field, and links between industry and academia.

Professor Tanaka was in Sydney to deliver a lecture at Connect 2005, the National Convention of the Royal Australian Chemical Institute. He also visited APAF (Macquarie Node), the headquarters of the Australian Proteome Analysis Facility at Macquarie University. The BMSF is a partner node of APAF. ♦

Unravelling a child cancer mystery

By Susi Hamilton

As a junior doctor 20 years ago, Glenn Marshall realised that neuroblastoma was a childhood cancer like no other. “It’s still such a mystery,” Associate Professor Marshall said. “While the survival rates for other types of childhood cancer have improved dramatically over the past 30 years, children with advanced neuroblastoma have a very low chance of cure.”

About 50 children in Australia each year are diagnosed with the disease, most commonly children under five. The solid-tumour cancer does not respond well to conventional therapies, so Professor Marshall and his colleagues have taken a different approach by attempting to understand its biology.

While they want to work out why it starts and how to stop it when it does occur, they also want to take it one step further: to prevent it from happening in the first place.

Professor Marshall, Professor Michelle Haber and Associate Professor Murray Norris, all UNSW conjoint academics based at the Children’s Cancer Institute Australia for Medical Research (CCIA), have won a five-year program grant from the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), worth more than four and a half million dollars, which will help them with their research.

“A program grant like this allows you to ask questions which are more high risk but high reward,” said Professor Marshall, the lead investigator on the program. “The grant also gives us the freedom to look at problems using experimental approaches which take several years to complete.”

Their data and that of others suggest that the cancer begins in the womb and could be triggered by birth events.

“Neuroblastoma is an embryonal cancer, which means that the cancer cell began with inappropriate persistence of embryo cells which form part of the nervous system,” Professor Haber said. “During development in the womb, primitive cell types change into more mature cell types as they form the normal body parts. Any excess primitive cells should die off before birth, but in the case of embryonal cancer, these cells remain alive beyond birth and undergo later changes that lead to cancer.

“Almost 50 percent of all childhood cancer begins in an embryo cell which should have been deleted in the pre-natal development process. We are concentrating on trying to understand why some embryo cells persist beyond birth. Success in our work will have a broad impact across a range of other child cancer types.”

The researchers have come up with a surprise finding in the animal model.

“We found three phases in the cancer process, one of which is where the cancer transiently regresses,” Professor Norris said. “That is important because if you could harness it, you could use it as a treatment and

If you measure the contribution of saving a child’s life, it is second only to breast cancer. If you look at the age of incidence and the number of years of life after cure, the impact on society is enormous

presumably it would be much less toxic.”

“This regression process in the mouse model mirrors a rare type of neuroblastoma in children which comes on very soon after birth,” Professor Marshall said. “It’s sometimes very widely spread and yet remarkably goes away without treatment.” While that positive outcome only occurs in around five percent of these cases, one of the other advantages for the survivors of this rare type of neuroblastoma is that the cancer does not reappear and causes no long-term side effects.

“It’s more a hope than a reality that we will be able to prevent neuroblastoma, but it’s one worth working towards,” Professor Norris said. “In the animal model, we can see the cancer right at the point when it begins. If you understood why some cells persisted and others went away, then you could come up with a prevention strategy.”

“Usually, survivors of advanced neuroblastoma have a poorer quality of life further down the track,” Professor Marshall said. “They often have problems with kidney function, growth and hearing.”

Most anti-cancer treatments do not take into account the unique sensitivity of normal cells in the growing child. Other areas under investigation by the team include the identification of genes that are good candidates for the development of molecular targeted therapy and drug discovery projects. The high incidence of short- and long-term side effects in some child cancer survivors with current therapies has encouraged the team to develop novel laboratory systems for drug discovery. This will hopefully lead to the identification of new anti-cancer drugs with a highly specific anti-cancer action and a low side-effect profile on normal cells.

As he walks through the children’s cancer ward at the Sydney Children’s Hospital, Professor Marshall issues a challenge.

“I would defy anyone to meet these children and their families, and see what they have to go through, and then say that child cancer is a solved problem,” he said. “It’s often difficult to get our work up to competitive funding levels because the human health impact is said to be minor, since child cancer represents less than one percent of all cancers in our society.

“But if you actually measure the contribution of saving a child’s life to society, it is second only to breast cancer. If you look at the age of incidence and the number of years of life after cure, the impact on society is enormous.” ♦

Our Eureka moment!

Four UNSW science researchers have collectively scooped the pool at the 2005 Eureka Prizes, taking out three awards, more than any other university or institution. Associate Professor James Franklin, Professor Veena Sahajwalla, Associate Professor Brett Neilan and adjunct lecturer Dr Brendan Burns were honoured with the Australian Museum Eureka Prizes, Australia's most comprehensive scientific awards for science and science communication.

Professor Franklin, of the School of Mathematics, won the Eureka Prize for Research in Ethics, awarded for investigation of theoretical or practical ethical issues that contributes to the understanding and development of ethical standards. Are there objective truths in ethics? Professor Franklin says yes – that there are core ethical values as true as $2 + 2 = 4$. These core values start with the significance and worth of each individual person. He believes that equality in ethics is as

important as the equals sign in mathematics.

Professor Sahajwalla, of the School of Materials Science and Engineering, was joint winner of the Eureka Prize Scientific Research, awarded for outstanding curiosity-driven scientific research, undertaken in Australia by an Australian scientist under the age of 40. The award went jointly to University of Sydney astrophysicist Peter Tuthill.

Professor Sahajwalla has shown that waste plastic bottles can be used to make steel. The plastic replaces coal as a source of carbon in the steel-making process. It's been a hard sell in a conservative industry, but now steel-makers around the world are picking up her ideas. She expects to see the technology in use in Australia and the US within two years.

Professor Neilan and Dr Burns, of the School of Biotechnology and Biomolecular Sciences, were part of the Astrobiology Research Team that won the Royal Societies of Australia Eureka Prize for Interdisciplinary

Scientific Research. With Macquarie University's Malcolm Walter, they are conducting pioneering research on the stromatolites (living rocks) of Western Australia, which they believe will reveal secrets of the origin of life on Earth and tell us about the potential for life elsewhere.

The researchers are the first to comprehensively investigate the vast microbial communities in living stromatolites, determining the species present; how they form rock; how they respond to stress; potential bioactive agents for medicine; and contributing to their conservation.

"This was an outstanding performance and one that confirms not only the high quality but the breadth and depth of talent of scientific research at UNSW," said Dean of Science, Professor Mike Archer. Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) Professor Les Field added his congratulations, describing the researchers' success as a terrific achievement. ♦



Sarah Wilson

Bamboo love shack

Australia's first student-designed and student-built bamboo building has been constructed at the Ecoliving Centre. Architecture students constructed the sustainable 'bamboo love shack' with the help of two bamboo experts studying at the Faculty of the Built Environment. Mittul Shah and Munir Vahanvati have extensive experience in training Indian communities in bamboo construction.

"There has been little training in bamboo as a construction material

in Australia and having Mittul and Munir advising on the project gave the students a unique experience," said Peter Graham, a lecturer in Architecture and 'love shack' leader. "Bamboo has a lower environmental impact than steel, is cheaper to buy, strong and lightweight and when it comes to aesthetics, bamboo wins hands down." The Bamboo Love Shack is at the UNSW Ecoliving Centre, 14 Arthur Street Randwick. ♦

Outside the razor wire

By Mary O'Malley

A group of second-year architecture students has developed a vision for asylum seekers experiencing life beyond the razor wire. The students have created designs and models for open detention centres – dwellings in which occupants can live with dignity and privacy but engage with the surrounding community when they wish.

The project is part of a course designed by Faculty of the Built Environment lecturers Jane Castle and Peter Graham, who wanted a project in which architecture students could learn to empathise with a group other than their own.

“Asylum seekers seemed the ideal group,” said Ms Castle, who with Mr Graham has just started the course with a third group of students. “The project was well underway before the latest government changes. But what the students have designed would seem to fit with the new model for accommodating asylum seekers.”

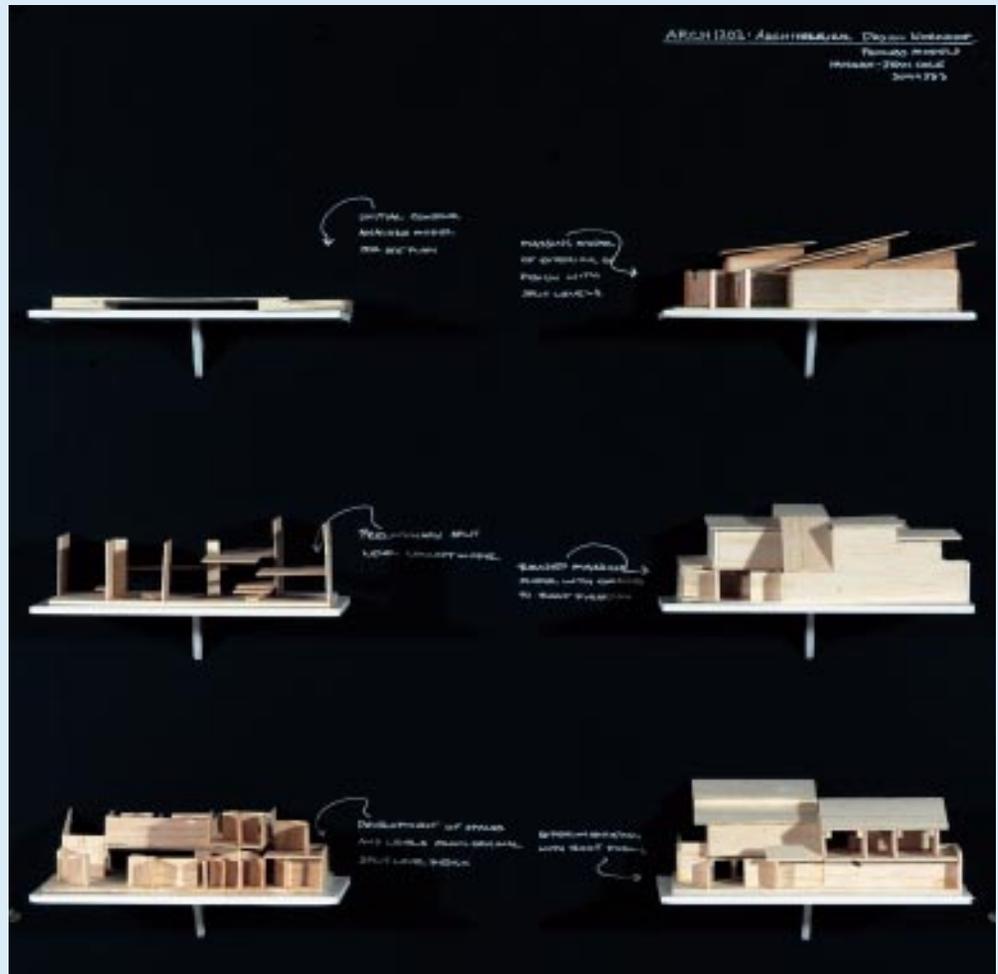
Based on a site on Botany Road, Alexandria, the hypothetical centres are designed to accommodate two Afghan families, living in a seamless blend of public and private spaces. Bedrooms and living quarters are private but kitchen facilities are shared. Public spaces include a refugee resource centre, facilities for meetings and prayers as well as a multi-function work space to allow the residents to engage in activities such as language classes, study and group activities.

The brief required an emphasis on designing connected spaces, not simply a series of buildings with different uses. Students have lyrically interpreted that with designs such as Sean Choo’s *Bridging*, two townhouse-like structures physically connected by an elevated walkway.

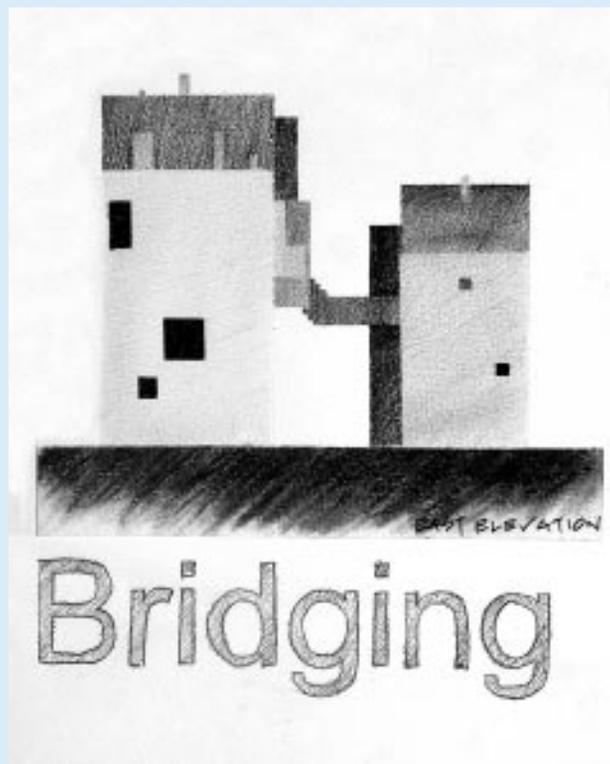
For Peter Graham, an expert in building life cycles, it was vital that the buildings were almost entirely sustainable. Students were asked to consider how the spaces promoted health and wellbeing, apply appropriate materials and technology, ensure the buildings fit the local climate and utilise renewable energy.

“These are designs that people in practice would be proud to have achieved,” Ms Castle said. “The students had to be aware of council regulations and government budgets. They have taken on board that these can’t be expensive structures. We are concerned with economic and social sustainability as well.”

The designs have won the praise of at least one tough critic. “As a practising architect, the solutions are so sensible and so sustainable,” said Caroline Pidcock, then president of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, after reviewing the students’ work. ♦



Above: The strength of Hannah Cole’s design process – shown in these developmental models – lead to a beautifully integrated and refined building design that addresses the social needs of the client group in a way that promotes the ideals of environmental and social sustainability – Peter Graham.



Left: Sean Choo’s very welcoming building has no hint of institutional design. The architecture appears simple and approachable, but underlying the design is a sophisticated understanding of the complexity of architectural connections. His response is simultaneously public and private, and connects extremely well with its cultural and environmental context – Jane Castle.

Thinking outside the square: introducing the cross-faculty professors



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Uniken introduces five outstanding academics appointed to UNSW's new cross-faculty Chairs, established as part of a bid to capture new areas of groundbreaking collaborative research. The appointments follow an international and nationwide search for outstanding academics able to transcend traditional boundaries between disciplines. The Professorships are funded by and named for the University's commercial arm, NewSouth Global.

Health and human rights: Daniel Tarantola

Daniel Tarantola's passion for health and human rights stretches back 35 years to his native France. As a young doctor with an interest in international events, he saw the injustice of health aid being tied to political motives. The small group he helped to establish went on to have a big future, the Nobel Peace Prize-winning Médecins sans Frontières (MSF).

"Until MSF started, official government assistance or formal non-governmental agencies and faith-based groups active in humanitarian health work were limited by their political or ideological focus," Professor Tarantola said. "We felt that there was a need for a way in which doctors could intervene in any conflict situation or disaster and focus on the victims, regardless of how governments looked upon them."

Professor Tarantola was MSF's first doctor to travel to the West African country of Upper Volta, now known as Burkino Faso, where chronic poverty had been aggravated by a catastrophic drought. It was the first of many such stints, such as a posting in the 1970s to northern Bangladesh where he supervised the World Health Organization team responsible for the eradication of smallpox and attended the last case of this disease in Asia.

While Professor Tarantola's career started out in the practice of medicine, he quickly realised the importance of research and policy. Most recently he was with the Harvard School of Public Health and the Francois-Xavier Bagnoud Centre for Health and Human Rights

where he pursued his work on HIV/AIDS.

"My experience has shown that if you really want to achieve significant impact through sound public health practices, you can't solely do it from a medical or health approach," he said. "You have to involve a variety of disciplines, in particular law and social sciences."

It is this multidisciplinary approach that attracted Professor Tarantola to the NewSouth Global Chair in Health and Human Rights. "This position is unique in that it brings three faculties together. There is nothing like this anywhere else in the world," he said.

Professor Tarantola will bring together researchers from Medicine, Arts and Social Sciences, and Law to work on issues such as HIV/AIDS, migration, post-conflict situations and others where the neglect or violation of human rights breed ill health and poverty.

"Where action is most needed now is in the research field and the documentation of the powerful synergy between health and human rights. We need to collect the evidence and make it known. UNSW has created an innovative opportunity to bring out this evidence through multidisciplinary research and make it the essence of our teaching."

Susi Hamilton

Professor Tarantola will give the inaugural John Hirschman Global Health Lecture, titled *The interface and tensions between international health, global health and human rights*, on 24 October at 6 pm, in the John B Reid Theatre at AGSM.

New Media Narrative and Theory: **Vivien Johnson**

“It was the late 1970s and my hire car broke down. I was stuck in a caravan park in Alice Springs waiting for parts and spent the days meandering through local galleries. I was captivated by the work of the Papunya painters – it was so beautiful and meaningful. But no-one in the art world seemed to see it at the time – that was reason enough to try to make people understand.”

Indigenous art has become a lifelong obsession for Vivien Johnson, the NewSouth Global Professor of New Media Narrative and Theory, who went on to spearhead the recognition of Indigenous art as part of contemporary Australian art and to promote awareness of copyright issues and the need for law reform in relation to Indigenous art forgery.

“I consider Indigenous art to be the most important art movement to have occurred in Australia to date,” said Professor Johnson, whose cross-faculty chair spans COFA, Arts and Social Sciences, and Law. Most recently with the Centre for Cross-Cultural Research at ANU, she has combined ethnographic, sociological, philosophical and art history research. Her role at UNSW will focus on Indigenous art and new media, copyright and cultural sovereignty issues and a new Australian art history.

Professor Johnson’s biographical dictionary of Western Desert artists will form part of the blueprint to be developed for the Dictionary of Australian Artists Online. As the project’s editor-in-chief, Professor Johnson believes the interactive online publication has the potential to be the most authoritative and accessible reference source on Australian art.

“It’s a revolutionary development to include Indigenous artists alongside non-Indigenous artists across the entire landscape of Australian art since colonisation,” Professor Johnson said. “One of the ways for Indigenous artists to be recognised as contemporary artists will be for their work to be explored thoroughly and documented in the same way non-Indigenous work might be. However, in compiling the dictionary, we must ensure it’s designed with database fields and search categories that are genuinely cross-cultural.”

The 1990s boom in contemporary Indigenous fine art has seen Professor Johnson’s focus shift to the campaign for intellectual and cultural property rights for Indigenous artists and communities and the issue of Indigenous art forgery.



Britta Campion

In 2000 she was a prosecution witness on the lack of authenticity of 22 paintings falsely attributed to the late Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri in a case that resulted in Australia’s first criminal conviction for art fraud. Professor Johnson will continue her pioneering work on forgery at the University through *The Clifford Possum Project: On Forgery and Forensics in Indigenous Art*.

“We hope it will provide a model [to combat] Indigenous art forgery and offer artists and collectors better protection from fraudulent attribution,” Professor Johnson said. “Forgery is not only a matter of the legal rights of Indigenous artists but it also affects Indigenous livelihoods and can undermine cultural imperatives for Indigenous artists to work collaboratively.”

Another major project Professor Johnson will undertake at UNSW is an exhibition of large Papunya Tula canvases from the 1970s from the National Museum of Australia collection. She will also undertake research on urban Indigenous art, with particular focus on NSW. “Artists like Gordon Syron pioneered a tradition of angry political Indigenous art which addresses issues that people don’t like to think about,” Professor Johnson said. “But that’s one of art’s most important functions in our society: to challenge people.”

Alex Clark

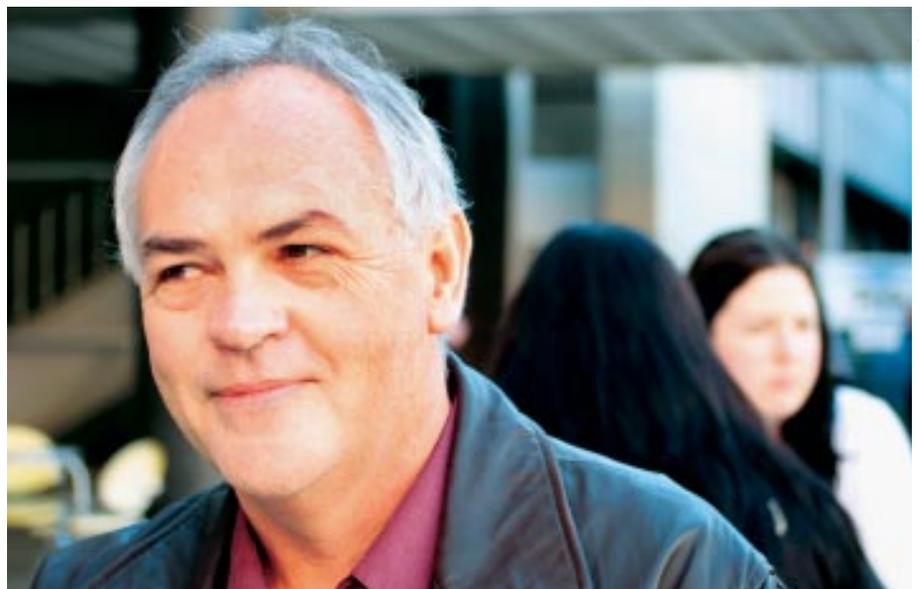
Criminology: **Chris Cunneen**

For Chris Cunneen, the NewSouth Global Professorship in Criminology brings with it two valuable prizes: a research budget and time. Professor Cunneen, who will take up the role early next year, comes from the University of Sydney, where he has been the high-profile director of the Institute of Criminology and teaching for more than a decade.

“It’s very exciting to have a research chair of this standing,” Professor Cunneen said. “In the area of criminology, there previously haven’t been these opportunities available in Australia.

“There are some excellent people in criminology in various faculties here, so the idea of working with them and putting together joint research proposals to further develop the profile of criminology is also very appealing.”

Building on the University’s criminology research group, the professorship in Criminology involves the faculties of Law, Arts and Social Sciences, and Science. ➤



Alex Clark

Professor Cunneen is recognised as a leading authority on issues relating to Indigenous people and the criminal justice system. He also has an international reputation for his research into juvenile justice, restorative justice, reparations and hate crimes. He has been very successful in obtaining research grants and competitive consultancy tenders. And he's not unfamiliar to UNSW. Professor Cunneen did his undergraduate degree in arts here and later worked at the Aboriginal Law Centre.

"The other area that's an important part of the role of the professorship is to establish and deepen the links that we have outside of Australia – that's important," he said. "I plan to pursue more international collaborations, particularly in emerging areas of concern such as criminalisation and human rights abuses."

Collaboration is an important theme in Professor Cunneen's approach. He is a committed advocate of interdisciplinary activity – a key part of the NSG Professor's role. "Criminology as an area of study is inherently interdisciplinary, in that it draws on law, history, sociology, psychology, and medical sciences, so it is an area of study that lends itself to this approach."

It was this broad range of intellectual traditions that attracted Professor Cunneen to criminology. "My interest came from the disciplines of history and sociology, not law. My focus has always been on the institutions of crime control rather than, say, the psychology of offending. But that's what is so appealing about this area – there is not just one way of looking at an issue."

While Professor Cunneen is currently finishing a number of projects, including an ARC-funded book on reparations for Indigenous people in Australia, he's excited by the opportunity to move into some new areas, particularly the way the 'war on terror' has shifted criminal justice processes. External roles include the chair of the Ministerial Advisory Council on juvenile justice and membership of a government task force on child sexual assault in Aboriginal communities.

Also on Professor Cunneen's list is a significant project on prisons, which he hopes will draw on the expertise of UNSW academics to look at the growth in the use of imprisonment over the last 20 years in Australia.

Denise Knight

Multidisciplinary Design: Richard Hough and Davina Jackson

Richard Hough is a leading structural engineer and a principal with one of the world's largest independent integrated design firms. Davina Jackson is an architectural writer and curator and a promoter of progressive architecture and design. Together the two, who have complementary positions as Professor and Associate Professor of Multidisciplinary Design, personify the goals of their appointment.

"It's a bringing together of the yin and the yang, I suppose," Professor Hough said. "Lots of architects notice there's another half to what they do and vice versa [with engineers]. Our job is to bring those roles more closely together."

In looking for cross connections between the faculties of Engineering, the Built Environment and the College of Fine Arts, the pair are working towards an integrated approach to design – one that goes beyond the aesthetic.

Design, in Professor Hough's opinion, includes making the critical decision that can lead towards more sustainable outcomes. Whether to build a desalination plant or encourage more demand management, for example, is very much a design question for engineers.

"It is up to engineers and architects to articulate consequences and future scenarios," he said. "We've been on a path of material development so far. We need to ask 'How does society need to grow? What kind of society do we want?' In my mind, this is the bigger context in which this position sits."

Not that the artistic aspect of design is downplayed. Professor Hough, a principal with the international Arup Group, believes we need iconic and beautiful projects to draw attention to such easily overlooked factors



Britta Campion

as the energy efficiency of a building, for example.

"Our broader based vision of design and how we can use it could also be a major boon to our economy," Associate Professor Jackson said. "I believe we have a major export industry in property development – creative services that we can offer to countries around the world."

Extending UNSW's reach internationally is an important part of the Multidisciplinary Design agenda. Workshops have been conducted with Politecnico di Milano, a key design centre in Italy, to build a collaboration that will form the basis of a design initiative in NSW.

"UNSW has taken a remarkable initiative here and I'm very impressed," Professor Hough said. "I think what is happening here is very unusual and prescient."

Mary O'Malley

The first NewSouth Global Professorship to be announced was that of biochemist Caroline (Lindy) Rae, as NewSouth Global Professor in Brain Sciences based at the Prince of Wales Medical Research Institute, at the launch of Brain Sciences UNSW in April.

"The appointment of Professor Rae [was] a coup for UNSW," Vice-Chancellor Professor Wainwright said. "One of her demonstrated strengths is innovative interdisciplinary neuroscience research. We are trying to achieve just this sort of broad collaboration with all the NSG Professorships."

"Studying the brain is like looking at a room through a keyhole," said Professor Rae, who is internationally recognised for her expertise in magnetic resonance. "You get a very narrow perspective. By providing an interdisciplinary approach, it will be like having dozens of keyholes."

Brain waves for diagnosis

By Susi Hamilton

Brain waves associated with sounds may hold the key to the first early diagnostic tool for schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.

“At the moment we don’t have any biological tests for these conditions,” said Associate Professor of Psychiatry, Philip Ward, who is based at Liverpool Hospital’s Schizophrenia Research Unit.

“Our research could eventually lead to a simple, cost-effective and safe way to distinguish patients with schizophrenia from those suffering bipolar disorder. This is important because a patient can get treatment sooner and hopefully have a better outcome.”

The paper, titled Auditory recovery cycle dysfunction in schizophrenia: A study using event-related potentials was published recently in the international journal *Psychiatry Research*.

“Sixty percent of patients with schizophrenia have auditory hallucinations,” said co-author, UNSW PhD candidate Nathan Clunas. “So we decided to look at a particular brain wave-form which measures

attention and attention deficits that can be found in these patients.”

The researchers recorded the brain waves associated with pairs of sounds in 17 patients with schizophrenia. Subjects heard the sounds through headphones while performing a visual distraction task. The patients’ results were compared with those of a healthy volunteer group matched for age and gender.

“We were looking at what occurs about 100 milliseconds after the sounds were presented,” Mr Clunas said. “The distinctive pattern observed in healthy volunteers was disrupted in schizophrenia patients. These findings may help us understand the problems that patients with schizophrenia experience in focusing attention on everyday events.”

The researchers are analysing the results of patients with bipolar disorder, to see whether different patterns of response to sounds are replicated. “Depending on the final results in the bipolar group, we may be on the way to developing a biological test,” Professor Ward said. ♦

First Australian chair of schizophrenia research

UNSW and the Prince of Wales Medical Research Institute (POWMRI) have secured the right to establish Australia’s first Professorial Chair of Schizophrenia Research. Eight million dollars will be invested over the next five years to establish the joint program.

The Neuroscience Institute of Schizophrenia and Allied Disorders (NISAD) was able to award the chair as a result of the commencement last year of a recurrent grant of \$500,000 to NISAD from the NSW Health Department to establish the position. NISAD will need to undertake fundraising to bring the total figure to \$1 million per year. UNSW and POWMRI will contribute a further \$3 million over the next five years.

“This is a significant milestone for NISAD, UNSW, POWMRI and most importantly, for sufferers of schizophrenia and their families,” said NISAD executive director Deborah Willcox. “The chair will drive the research effort of some of the world’s leading experts in schizophrenia, here in NSW and overseas.”

The focus of the research will be in developmental neurobiology.

“The brain sciences – neuroscience,

psychiatry, psychology and neurology – are major strengths of UNSW and affiliated institutes,” Vice-Chancellor Professor Mark Wainwright said. “This professorship will capitalise on those strengths and build new pathways to advance scientific knowledge and ultimately, treatments.”

“We are thrilled to have won this bid,” said the convenor of Brain Sciences at UNSW, Professor Philip Mitchell. “It is an exciting opportunity to focus the intellectual capital we have at UNSW and POWMRI on this devastating condition.

“We were successful because we have a high-calibre research environment in neuroscience and psychiatry, we had strong financial support through UNSW and there are impressive facilities at POWMRI.”

“The Institute has been expanding its research in both laboratory sciences and into mental illness research. The partnership with NISAD and UNSW will allow us to harness neuroscience research to tackle the heavy burden of schizophrenia,” said Professor Peter Schofield, the executive director of POWMRI. ♦

Painting a bright future for Indigenous medical students



Marie Bashir

The NSW Governor, Professor Marie Bashir, recently launched the Shalom Gamarada Art Exhibition of Indigenous art, which went on to raise more than \$700,000 towards a residential scholarship program for Indigenous medical students at Shalom College.

“We were overwhelmed by the support from the community,” said Shalom College CEO Hilton Immerman. “We offered the first place to an Indigenous medical student this year. Due to the success of this exhibition, that position will be ongoing. We also plan to add another two residential scholarships.” ♦

Please hold, your call will be answered shortly

By Alex Clark

Welcome, please make a selection from the following options. To pay your phone bill press one... To have this list of options repeated please press nine... your call is very important to us... your call is in a queue and will be answered by the next available operator.

Listening to an automated message, waiting in a queue to pay a bill, can be efficient but more often it's a painful experience. For Dr Gillian Fuller, it's the perfect example of how the fundamental architecture of our networked society is a system of queues and thresholds. According to Dr Fuller, these queues help explain how we configure ourselves socially to get things done.

"Queues are not new," said Dr Fuller, from the School of Media, Film and Theatre. "One reads that Noah deployed the queue as a method of traffic management in the Ark."

Increases in technology and global mobility have seen queue systems permeate most areas of daily life. Dr Fuller's research was largely a response to the government's rhetoric on asylum seekers as 'queue jumpers'.

In Australia, queues have a moral dimension and those who keep their place in the queue are seen as ethical citizens. "Queue jumping is seen as holding impoverished moral values and as antisocial civil disobedience," Dr Fuller said.

This month she is part of a moving conference, on board the Trans-Siberian Railway from Moscow to Beijing, titled *Capturing the Moving Mind: Management and Movement in the Age of Permanently Temporary War*. Dr Fuller will present her paper, *The queue: motion capture, world architecture and the dynamics of stasis*, that examines how queue structures can be thought about as a major form of social organisation, the concept of 'waiting your turn'.

"The conference brings together researchers,

philosophers, artists and those interested in management and movement," Dr Fuller said. On board the moving conference she will also present a database on call centres worldwide.

"The use of telequeues and automated voices in service encounters signals a shift in the communicative experiences of our everyday lives," Dr Fuller said. "This project is a comparative study of the human/machine interactions at call centre operations across four continents and five key service sectors: credit services, telco retail, government social services, airline reservations and retail complaints.

"No-one goes into banks anymore, so many of our service exchanges are done with these machines that take on a voice. We are seeing a move from thinking about communication and media as only in a broadcast model to one where everything we do involves communication, particularly focusing on digital network communications." ♦

The house that Rotaract built

By Sarah Wilson

A chance encounter at a Kensington laundromat has led to a group of students embarking on a self-funded trip to the Philippines to build low-cost housing.

When telecommunications engineering student Tom Fisher's washing machine broke down, he went to the laundromat. "While I was waiting, I got talking to the owner, a Rotarian, who told me what was involved in running a Rotary Club. He got me thinking about floating the idea of a club past a few uni mates."

Tom set about creating a UNSW-based Rotaract Club, which is similar to a Rotary Club but designed specifically for people between 18 and 30. The club now has about 40 members, all students of the University.

Andrew Fist, an engineering/commerce student and Rotaract member, contacted the Australian affiliate of Habitat for Humanity, a not-for-profit international organisation that builds affordable housing in places of identified need, which had been behind a previous trip which Andrew made to Fiji to build housing.

The Rotaract Club and Habitat for Humanity decided on the Filipino island of Bohol as a suitable place for the students to help out. In July this year, after many fundraising drives and with support from the UNSW Union, the Student Guild and New College, 14 UNSW Rotaract members headed off for three weeks.

"Part of the attraction for working with Habitat was that anyone could be involved, you didn't have to have any special skills," Tom said. The students started work building housing in a village created by Habitat for Humanity on the outskirts of the city of Tagbilaran on Bohol Island.



UNSW's Rotaract members hard at work on Bohol

"We worked on five buildings, doing labouring work," Tom said. "It was such a rewarding experience. Locals, including those who would be living in the houses after they were built, came along and helped out. The neighbourhood kids, whose English was great, would also gather around us, curious about where we were from.

"And being shown around by locals was a real bonus. We got the benefit of insider knowledge and learnt a bit about the Filipino way of life. The trip was an incredibly rewarding experience. While most of us wanted to travel overseas, this was a unique way of doing it and we got to leave something behind that benefits the locals in a lasting way." ♦

The senselessness: **the Somme**

By Louisa Wright

A review of *The Somme* called it a near-perfect argument for the sheer insanity of war. The recent book by Associate Professor Robin Prior, of UNSW@ADFA, and University of Adelaide's Emeritus Professor Trevor Wilson have analysed the flawed decision-making concerning the Battle of the Somme, a five-month period of 1916 in which the British Army lost an almost inconceivable 3600 soldiers every day.

"Although there are hundreds of books about the Somme," said Professor Prior, head of UNSW@ADFA's School of History, "we didn't feel any of them had got it quite right in terms of what caused the British attack to fail."

The two authors also wanted to establish whether the 432,000 British and allied casualties were necessary and to examine the widely held belief that the British High Command had used Australians as shock troops.

"Our conclusion was that whatever you did in this war, you lost a lot of men," Professor Prior said, "but the way the battle was fought by the British High Command maximised their own casualties and tended to minimise those of the Germans."

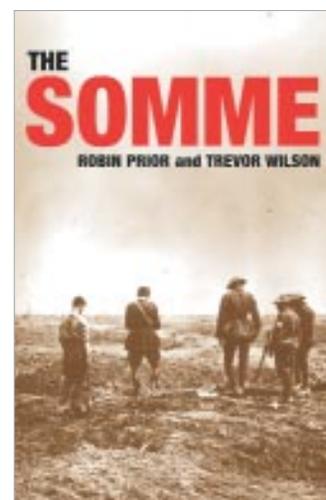
The key factor in the battles that constituted the Battle of the Somme was artillery. The

authors show that the troops could do nothing without sufficient artillery fire, whether or not they were well trained or had high morale. If they were supported by firepower, they had a decent chance; without it, they had no chance at all.

"The British High Command were fighting some kind of 19th century war in the 20th century," Professor Prior said. "It was not a battle of attrition. They were trying to blast a hole in the German lines to send the cavalry through, but that's not attrition, which is killing as many of the other side for the least number of your own." The British did the opposite. Between July and November 1916, casualties on both sides amounted to an estimated 660,000 young men, with German losses less than half that of the British.

Concerning the notion that Australians sustained particularly high casualties, Professor Prior says that the British did not discriminate between Australians and their own troops, or indeed any allied troops from New Zealand, Canada and South Africa.

General Haig's tactic was to try to punch a hole through German lines through which he could send his five cavalry divisions to take the



Western Front. The British gained a total of 12.5 kilometres over five months in the largest and most costly battle ever fought by the British army.

"It is the moment when Britain becomes a major military power, and from that moment on, it is when Britain takes over from France on the Western Front." ♦

Artful disobedience

By David McNeill

In our contemporary cultural climate, artists are confronted with a choice between producing prototypes for social manipulation, in the service of the advertising and fashion industries, or they can continue a stubborn tradition of social criticism and subversion.

An exhibition dubbed *Disobedience* will present the work of local and overseas artists who make works that register issues of social justice or protest against the brutal excesses of economic globalisation.

The artists include Alexander Brener and Dmitry Vilensky from Russia, Shilpa Gupta from India, Michael Goldberg and Kendell Geers, who have both worked in South Africa, documentary photographer Dean Sewell, Suzann Victor, a resident Australian from Singapore and Beluchi weavers from Afghanistan. The local housing activist collective Squatspace and Australian artists Rachel Ormella and Gordon Bennett also contribute work.

The exhibition is sponsored and curated by the Centre for Contemporary Art and Politics at UNSW. The centre was formed in 2003 to promote new forms of political intervention in both the theory and practice of art. It has sponsored a number of exhibitions, conferences and publications dealing with the communication of political issues, and artistic intervention.

Disobedience will follow the 2005 Sydney Social Forum. A discussion/workshop, a film showing, and talks by participating artists will accompany it. *Disobedience*, curated by Zanny Begg and David McNeill, is at Ivan Dougherty Gallery, COFA, from 9 September for five weeks. ♦



Kendell Geers, *After Love* (1996)

**By David Gonski, AO
Chancellor**

I commenced my term as Chancellor on 1 August 2005 and since then have spent time touring the University and meeting senior management and staff. I look forward to reporting further on Council's business in upcoming issues of *Uniken*.

The following Council committees met during July and August:

Finance Committee

Finance Committee considered quarterly financial reports, project reports for the North Mall Development Zone, noted the establishment of *UNSW Hong Kong Foundation Ltd* and of *UNSW and Study Abroad – Friends and US Alumni Inc*, recommended to August Council the funding arrangement for UNSW Asia, and a policy on competitive neutrality and pricing, to ensure support of UNSW's business practices.

Nominations and Remuneration Committee

NRC considered matters relating to leave without pay and secondment policy, board appointments to associated entities, senior staff remuneration, the terms of office for appointed members of Council and procedures for nomination of persons for appointment. The terms of office and procedures for nomination will be

reconsidered at NRC's next meeting in October.

Student Affairs Committee

Student Affairs Committee considered the Senior Management Group response to the review of student associations pending introduction of voluntary student unionism (VSU), and a paper from the student organisations on non-monetary forms of support. Noting that the final form of VSU legislation remained unclear, consultation would continue. The Committee also noted reports on student equity, the operation of the COFA Shuttle Bus and on projects funded by miscellaneous student activity fees.

Honorary Degrees Committee

Honorary Degrees Committee made recommendations to August Council on the award of honorary degrees. Nominations may come forward *in confidence* to Council by two routes: via Faculty Boards and Academic Board for 'distinguished eminence in some branch of learning appropriate to that Faculty', or via Honorary Degrees Committee, for 'eminent service to the community [or] to the University' (UNSW By-laws, Ch 6, 56).

Chancellor's Committee

Chancellor's Committee recommended to August Council the creation of three senior management positions for

UNSW Asia, the schedule for election of the Deputy Chancellor for a two-year period commencing 1 January 2006, the timetable for the 2006 Council elections and the final report on a review of NewSouth Global.

Risk Management Committee

In August, RMC considered a number of reports to assist Council in discharging its governance obligations in the areas of risk management other than internal control (including fraud control, financial reporting, and the audit process, given oversight by Audit Committee). Council has delegated to management responsibility for managing all risks of the University and its controlled entities.

Council Minutes and Policy

Council minutes, policy, the UNSW Register of Delegations and other information can be accessed by all members of the University via the Secretariat Services website (www.secretariat.unsw.edu.au).

For further information on matters relating to Council or its Committees, please contact Victoria Eyles, v.eyles@unsw.edu.au, 9385 3068 or Helen Parks, h.parks@unsw.edu.au, 9385 3072.

The Chancellor is the chair of Council.

2 August 2005

The Academic Board considered a report of the Committee on Postgraduate Coursework Degree Nomenclature, resolving that the word 'Executive' not be used to precede the word Master, except in the case of the EMBA. The Academic Board recommended the introduction of Graduate Certificate and Master degrees in Construction Project Management, a Master of Construction and Project Management in Professional Practice, a Graduate Diploma in Pharmaceutical Medicine and a Master of Professional Accounting (Extension).

The Academic Board has asked the Postgraduate Coursework Committee to examine the structure of Masters degrees with a view to bringing a coherent set of guidelines forward.

The Academic Board received a report on UNSW Asia from Professor Ingleson, and recommended a report on the implementation of the revised General Education Rules to Council.

The Academic Board's major discussion issue for August was *Should UNSW host blog sites?* This topic invoked topical discussion of academic freedom, as set against potential damage to the University's reputation if unsuitable material is posted.

The UNSW web protocols will be re-examined in the light of this discussion.

The Academic Board welcomed Clare

Taylor, the Director of Marketing, who presented a new brand and visual identity for UNSW to be used in forthcoming advertising campaigns.

The Academic Board held its annual budget forum on 1 August, where the academic impacts of the 2005 budget were examined, and the principles for the 2006 budget were enunciated. The next Academic Board forum is on 20 September, on current DEST initiatives in Higher Education.

If there are issues you would like me or Academic Board or its Committees to consider, or if you would like to attend a meeting, please let me know via a.dooley@unsw.edu.au or 9385 2393.

**Tony Dooley
President, Academic Board**



The ideas man

Martin Krygier's new book, a collection of essays written over twenty years called *Civil Passions*, defies easy categorisation. Part history, part sociology, part philosophy, it is a tangible example of his disdain for what he dubs false dichotomies in general and intellectual apartheid in particular. He spoke to *Uniken* editor **Louisa Wright**.

The passions of Martin Krygier's title are engaged on three levels: that of social behaviour (where he advocates civil societies, in which the person who is not one's friend is not necessarily one's enemy); the level of social analysis, in which he warns against automatically casting social problems or options as exclusively either/or choices; and the level of public debate, where he argues that we too easily characterise opponents as culpably wrong and permit ourselves by contrast a sense of absolute correctness and virtue.

"Dividing the world into friends and enemies is a bad way of going about business," the law professor said. "It falsifies the complexity of many of the difficult predicaments we face... we too easily go for the throat of our opponents, rather than understanding the ground they stand on."

On social behaviour: "Non-predatory relationships are routine – and routinely expected – in civil society," he said. "Civil society is a platform for anything good to happen in society and without it, you live in fear. But it doesn't happen naturally, so you have to

think about the cultural and social and institutional conditions which make it possible."

His second area of interest is demolishing social analysis that trades in dichotomous choices, often false to the complexities of the world: state versus civil society, Australians versus 'ethnics', pride versus shame. He cites the example of civil liberties versus the 'war on terror'. "Terrorism is of course very damaging to a civil society. These are enemies, not just opponents, and must be fought. But there is a tendency to cancel freedoms, which is also a danger to civil society.

"I am against the notion that you can't fruitfully combine an acknowledgement of the danger of terrorism with regard for and protection of liberties which are necessary for a civil society," he said. "One thing that is at stake in combating terrorism is the preservation of the character of the very thing you are defending."

The third area of interest he describes as the "maggots and angels" style of debate, a phrase from Polish dissident Adam Michnik, who reacted to a denunciation as 'maggots' those who compromised with the regime. Michnik argued against casting opponents as 'maggots'

both because it denied the moral complexities of persons and predicaments, and it tended to fuel a reassuring sense that, by comparison, the denouncer is an angel.

This collection of essays includes much of the material of Professor Krygier's Boyer Lectures, titled *Between Fear and Hope: Hybrid Thoughts on Public Values* (1997) but most of the essays appear together for the first time. *Civil Passions: Selected Writings* is published by Black Inc. and is available at the UNSW Bookshop. ♦

Martin Krygier has been at the UNSW Law School since 1982 where he established the Legal Theory and the Law and Social Theory courses. He also teaches courses on post-communism, cross-listed between the faculties of Law and Arts and Social Sciences.

He leaves this month for a year at the Centre for Advanced Studies in the Behavioural Sciences, at Stanford University, during which he will research issues concerning the rule of law as well as a book on US social theorist Philip Selznick.

Defending Voltaire to death

By Helen Pringle

Andrew Fraser is in trouble. For some time now the associate professor in public law at Macquarie University has been making the argument that Africans in Australia are a crime risk because of their low IQ and high testosterone. Professor Fraser offered to the Australian media the following remarkable facts about sub-Saharan refugees: “Their IQ is 70 to 75 so there are differences between the cognitive ability of blacks and whites. Blacks also have significantly more testosterone floating around their system than whites.”

Despite appearances to the contrary, Professor Fraser seems to consider himself a moderate. And he has been relatively even-handed: he has also targeted Asians, although apparently because they have assimilated too successfully. When his views first came to media attention, I waited for his defenders to preface their remarks with something along the lines of: “As Voltaire said, ‘I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.’” I didn’t have to wait long.

The Vice-Chancellor of Macquarie, Di Yerbury, sought to outflank other Voltaire quoters by enlisting the 17th century philosopher on her side. Professor Yerbury noted, “I am a passionate defender of free speech, subscribing to the saying attributed to Voltaire: ‘I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.’”

Professor Yerbury offered to buy Fraser out of his contract so that he could speak even more freely. Begin with the absurd position that free speech is an absolute, and you are going to be back pedalling like Yerbury in very short order.

Letter writers to newspapers invoked Voltaire to defend Professor Fraser’s right to speak; even the usually careful Hugh Mackay asked readers to defend the right to speak out, pleading, “As Voltaire was supposed to have said (though he didn’t, quite), ‘I disapprove...’”

Professor Yerbury, the letter writers and columnists such as Mr Mackay and Janet Albrechtsen are taking a familiar course. The Prime Minister himself has also taken the oath, variously in relation to Pauline Hanson, protestors against conflict in Iraq and calls to make flag-burning a criminal offence.

Mr Howard’s expressed view, that Voltaire’s sentence is a cornerstone of Australian democracy, is widely shared. In 2002, the Australian Press Council responded to a complaint by saying: “The 18th century writer-philosopher Voltaire is credited with the celebrated comment: ‘I disapprove of what you say but I will defend to the death your right to say it.’ This sentiment is at the heart of legislation in most democracies to protect rights of free speech and publication.”

Many others are also takers of the solemn oath. In early 2000, Ron Casey had broadcast radio

commercials pleading for freedom of speech, in which he quoted Voltaire’s sentence. Mike Carlton commented: “Ron’s a lovely bloke, but three weeks ago he would have thought Voltaire was a refrigerator.”

One problem with all this solemn oath-taking with reference to Voltaire is that Voltaire never said anything remotely like this. Voltaire died in 1778. The claim only gained currency after 1906 – for the good reason that it was first composed in 1906, in a book called *The Friends of Voltaire*, written by Evelyn Beatrice Hall under the pseudonym SG Tallentyre. A chapter of Hall’s book concerns Helvétius, the philosopher and author of *De l’esprit*, a work condemned by the Pope and the parliament of Paris, and publicly burned by the hangman. Voltaire and his friends had not much liked Helvétius’ book because of its insufficient recognition of Voltaire’s genius. But after its condemnation, they somewhat warmed to its author.

In her book, Hall pictures Voltaire’s reaction to the brouhaha: “‘What a fuss about an omelette!’ he had exclaimed when he heard of the burning... ‘I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it,’ was his attitude now.” Hall later said that the sentence attributed to Voltaire was her paraphrase of “Think for yourself and let others enjoy the privilege of doing so too” (from Voltaire’s *Essay on Tolerance*).

It seems unlikely that Andrew Fraser being called to account by Macquarie University will make anyone much warm to him. It’s doubtful whether even Fraser himself would recognise the expression of his “ideas” as worth defending to the death. I might just be able to defend his right to express those ideas, along with a few coon jokes, over the backyard barbecue. But their expression in a public context is more a malign denigration of the civil standing of already vulnerable groups. I am not sure why I should feel compelled to defend discrimination to the death – even if it is discrimination by a person who claims to be a victim of a pervasive political correctness now allegedly spreading through the lazy academic world of Australian universities.

The words falsely attributed to Voltaire are usually spoken in defence of those who have the certainty that they are speaking the truth and the hope that other people hate them for it. The irony is that Voltaire himself was notoriously fond of life and reluctant to throw it away in order to defend any senseless babble of which he either approved or disapproved. ♦

The words falsely attributed to Voltaire are usually spoken in defence of those who have the certainty that they are speaking the truth and the hope that other people hate them for it

Dr Helen Pringle is a senior lecturer in the School of Politics and International Relations in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.