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uniken

**Creationism
in a tuxedo?**
the intelligent
design debate

- **Commuting on the information highway**
- **The future of the United Nations**
- **It's termite time at your place**



UNSW

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Group of Eight

From the Vice-Chancellor



As 2005 draws to a close, it is timely to look back on the achievements of the past twelve months, and identify opportunities for the future. UNSW has performed well by most indicators in 2005, particularly considering the difficult circumstances of the previous year. We can be proud of our success rate in the recently announced ARC grants, where we maintained a ten percent share of the national funding allocated for new projects, ranking an equal third with the University of Queensland. We led all universities in the number of Linkage project grants approved and led the Group of Eight in the amount of funding allocated for that scheme. With the new incentives for researchers now built into our budget process, I'm confident we will do even better in 2006.

It is pleasing to note that the number of ARC grants won by the Faculty of Commerce & Economics and AGSM puts us at number one in the country in the area of business, economics and management. With UNSW back in sole control of AGSM, following the ending of the joint venture with the University of Sydney, we have the freedom to pursue new opportunities for collaboration with AGSM, involving not only the Faculty of Commerce & Economics but other faculties as well.

Increasingly, universities are being ranked by different organisations, often using quite different criteria. Nevertheless, it is essential to ensure that our national and international standing continues to grow. It was pleasing to note in the Times HES Top 100 rankings for 2005 that our engineering faculty was top in Australia and 16th in the world, and that all of our faculties ranked within the top 10 nationally. It is important, however, that we focus on lifting performance across the board so that our overall ranking improves.

This year has been notable for progress on a number of other fronts. We are set to open enrolments for one of our most significant ventures ever, UNSW Asia. Our new graduate research school is up and running. A new master plan has been developed for the Kensington campus and the new Law building and other developments will transform lower campus. We have yet another award-winning building to our credit – 223 Anzac Parade, opened by Education Minister Brendan Nelson – and the opportunity to develop a new biomedical building on upper campus is under consideration.

I close by thanking you all for your support over the past twelve months and wish you a well-earned summer break with your family and friends. ♦

Mark Wainwright



Alex Clark

Another landmark UNSW building has been honoured. Like the Scientia before it, the building known variously as L5 and 223 Anzac Parade has won a substantial award. The NSW Master Builders Association's Excellence in Construction Awards recently conferred on it the Outstanding Construction Award for 2005, as well as prizes for an educational building of more than \$25 million and for the best use of concrete.

The building, which replaced the Unisearch House, is now home to about 60 classrooms and an office tower. It is occupied by the UNSW node of NICTA, to be known as the Neville Roach Laboratory, and teaching and administration facilities for the UNSW Institute of Languages and UNSW Foundation Year. The building is a significant development in the peripheral Western Campus.

It has an innovative ventilation system and a strong vertical image of exposed concrete. The glazed façade is a series of inward- and outward-turned panels. Completed in June this year, the building took 18 months, cost \$38 million, used 12,000 tonnes of concrete and at its peak period, had 150 workers on site. It was opened by Education Minister Brendan Nelson in a formal ceremony last month. ♦

Keep the flame alive

The Chief Justice of NSW, Justice James Spigelman, spoke at a Lighting of the Flame ceremony last month in the partly-constructed new Law building. Dean of Law Professor Leon Trakman invited founding Dean, Hal Wootten, Law Alumni President Gabrielle Upton, and Student Law Society President Eugene Yeung to light the flame. The event also marked the official launch of the Law Endowment Campaign, which is based on the theme of *Building Great Minds, Building Partnerships and Building Law*. "The campaign to establish a Law Endowment Fund is vital to the future success of our institution," Professor Trakman said. "We are pleased that a number of our key partners and alumni have already made some valuable contributions." Construction of the building is ahead of schedule, with a completion date now targeted for July 2006. For more information about the campaign see www.law.unsw.edu.au/newbuilding/index.asp. ♦



Free legal database gets the common touch

The Australasian Legal Information Institute (AustLII), a joint facility of the UNSW and UTS law faculties, recently launched the Commonwealth Legal Information Institute (CommonLII) at the Commonwealth Law Conference in London. AustLII received a \$650,000 linkage infrastructure grant in the latest ARC funding round to expand its legal research facilities, which includes the development of CommonLII.

CommonLII provides free online access to core legal information from all Commonwealth and common law countries and territories. "By making each country's legal system more transparent, CommonLII will support the rule of law throughout the Commonwealth," said UNSW Law professor and AustLII's co-director, Graham Greenleaf. "This transparency will also support international trade and investment." The database is at www.commonlii.org. ♦

Coffee with the Secretary-General

Discussing issues of international policy with the United Nations Secretary-General might sound daunting but UNSW student Anna Gilet (pictured) took the opportunity in her stride when she met Kofi Annan during a recent trip to Geneva. Anna was one



of eight students from law and social work who attended the annual executive committee meetings of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (ExCom) and related meetings with the non-government sector. "I spoke with Kofi about the contribution NGOs can make in the process of policy-making at the international level," Anna, an intern at the University's Centre for Refugee Research, said. Dr Eileen Pittaway, the director of the centre and her colleague Linda Bartolomei led the visit to Geneva, fulfilling a practical component of the students' final-year studies. "The educational experience of lobbying at the UN level was a privilege," Susan Hall, a social work student, said. ♦

Tackling childhood cancer

The Children's Cancer Institute Australia (CCIA) has been awarded a program grant of more than \$3 million over five years by the Cancer Institute NSW, one of only three such program grants awarded by the Institute since its inception. The grant is for excellence in translational research and will support researchers in programs aimed at developing new, targeted approaches to treating childhood cancer. The results of the work in molecular carcinogenesis, molecular diagnostics and experimental therapeutics will also be used to help tackle common adult cancers. The team – Associate Professors Glenn Marshall, Murray Norris and Professor Michelle Haber – also recently won a five-year NHMRC grant, worth more than \$4.5 million for their work on neuroblastoma. ♦

Spinal cord awards

Professor Elspeth McLachlan, co-director of the Prince of Wales Medical Research Institute's Spinal Injuries Research Centre, has received a NSW government program grant of \$1.5 million – half the total amount awarded in this round of funding for work on spinal cord injury and neurological conditions. Professor McLachlan and her team will develop an experimental program to understand the changes in nerve and muscle function after a spinal cord injury. Three project grants were also awarded to researchers affiliated with UNSW: Dr Matthew Kiernan, also of POW MRI; Dr Bryce Vissel from the Garvan Institute for Medical Research; and Professor Elizabeth Burcher, from the School of Medical Sciences. ♦

A study in ice

Twelve thousand people in Sydney, or nearly two-thirds of those who use 'ice' (crystalline methamphetamine), are dependent on the drug, according to a major new study of Australia's methamphetamine market by the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC). Methamphetamine is a synthetic stimulant drug sold under various street names, including 'speed' and 'meth', and has emerged in recent years as a drug commonly used in the party scene. "Methamphetamine users are 11 times more likely to have had a psychotic episode than the general population," NDARC's Dr Rebecca McKetin said. "The more pure forms of ice and base make up over two-thirds of the methamphetamine market, while an unknown amount ends up on the ecstasy market, being sold as pills." ♦

Chloe's the best

UNSW Japanese Studies student Chloe Keeble has won a trip to Japan after taking first prize in the open division of the 2005 National Japanese Language Speech Contest. "It sends a strong signal to the Sydney Japanese community that UNSW has the best Japanese program in Sydney, which is important for the future prospective employment of our students," said Professor Kinoshita Thomson, head of Modern Language Studies. Held annually by the Embassy of Japan and the Japan Foundation, the contest is open to university students studying Japanese who do not speak it as their native language. ♦

For the record

The laws seriously limit a number of fundamental human rights and are not subject to an effective procedure on judicial review that provides adequate safeguards.

Professor Andrew Byrnes of the Faculty of Law in a report to ACT Chief Minister Jon Stanhope on proposed anti-terrorism legislation – *The Australian*

If the aim is to get new powers in place at the cost of having a proper parliamentary debate, Australia risks passing the wrong law.

Professor George Williams of the Gilbert + Tobin Centre of Public Law on proposed anti-terrorism legislation – *The Age*

A robust and mature democracy should be expected to absorb unpalatable ideas without prosecuting them.

Dr Ben Saul of the Faculty of Law on proposed anti-terrorism legislation that includes sedition provisions – *Sunday Age*

[The use of sedition laws] is nearly always the subject of considerable regret at a later date.

Chris Connolly of the Faculty of Law on proposed anti-terrorism legislation that includes sedition provisions – *The Australian*

You need a civil society so people can learn how to act towards each other. But the concentration on winning makes people treat others like objects.

Dr Helen Pringle, School of Politics and International Relations – *The Age*

Ninety-five percent of the Australian population is perched on aquifers... the water is potable, it has a low environmental effect and there is nothing like the maintenance cost [of desalination].

Professor Mike Archer, Dean of Science, on an alternative to desalination – *Business Review Weekly*

It is so gross, so unobvious, so blunt that it puzzles me.

Professor John Roberts of AGSM on the government advertising campaign on industrial changes in WorkChoices – *Sydney Morning Herald*

[WorkChoices] is a pretty nasty Bill but this is the nastiest part because it potentially adversely affects all workers.

Associate Professor Braham Dabscheck of the School of Organisation and Management on the possibility that all workers may be exposed to pay cuts to the minimum wage – *Sydney Morning Herald*

Law academics leading the public debate on terrorism

The recent impassioned debate about the anti-terrorism legislation, its provisions on sedition and the unusual recalling of parliament to pass a one-word amendment has highlighted the role of the public intellectual in political debate. Leading the pack have been members of the UNSW Faculty of Law.

In print and on air, faculty academics Andrew Byrnes and Chris Connolly were joined by colleagues from the Gilbert + Tobin Centre of Public Law, George Williams, Ben Saul and Andrew Lynch.

Between them, the five have entered the debate on virtually every aspect of the legislation and at each stage of its progress. Professor Byrnes was one of three constitutional experts commissioned by ACT Chief Minister Jon Stanhope for their views on the then-draft legislation. Professor Byrnes and his two ANU colleagues queried whether the government had demonstrated that such laws were necessary, and drew attention to the stark inconsistencies between the provisions of the Bill relating to preventative detention orders and the control orders and Australia's international human rights obligations.

Dr Saul wrote and circulated among members of parliament a paper in which he called the extension of the law of incitement, through the proposed inclusion of sedition charges, "a hasty and imprudent overreaction which inevitably criminalises valuable... contributions to public discussion". He warned that Muslim clerics who praised the actions of terrorists risked having their mosques proscribed as a terrorist organisation. He also did not miss the chance to promote a favoured long-term project: "An Australian Human Rights Act would ensure there is judicial scrutiny of counter-terrorism laws, to ensure that rights and security do not tip dangerously out of balance."

He was joined in his concern about the sedition provisions by Chris Connolly, best known for his role as the director of the Financial Services Consumer Policy Centre. Mr Connolly, also a human rights lawyer, commented widely on the effect of the sedition proposals on theatres, playwrights, satirists and political commentators. The proposed laws, he said, would give the government "unfettered power" because seditious acts did not need to involve terrorism or violence. The classic Australian war movie, *Gallipoli*, could have been considered under the proposed laws to be giving support to the enemy.

Dr Lynch, director of the Gilbert + Tobin Centre of Public Law's terrorism and law project, was straight to the point about the haste with which the legislation was passed. He also drew attention to the "devil in the detail" of another Bill which concerns the use of evidence by video link and which made it easier for the prosecution to object to such evidence than for a defendant to do so. He argued that the Bill raised the possibility that evidence obtained overseas – possibly through torture – might be used in Australian courts. His concerns received favourable comment from the Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee in reporting on its inquiry into that Bill.

Professor Williams commented widely on the comparison of the legislative process in Australia and Britain, where he has been looking at the Westminster response to the same set of perceived threats in the wake of the London transport system bombs earlier this year. "While both Howard and Blair are resolute in their desire to get new laws through parliament, it seems likely that our laws will be inferior to those we are copying and that we risk doing greater damage to our democracy and fundamental liberties," he said.

Consistently the group has made the point that existing legislation is sufficiently broad to cover any existing terrorist threat, and therefore any extension to the existing legal framework was unlikely to be urgent. ♦

By Louisa Wright

The Senate inquiry into the provisions of the Anti-Terrorism Bill (No. 2) 2005 is due to report by late November (after *Uniken* has gone to press). Two submissions from the UNSW Faculty of Law were made to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee, one by Chris Connolly, and the other, a joint submission on behalf of the Gilbert + Tobin Centre of Public Law by Dr Lynch, Dr Saul and Professor Williams. The submissions provided detailed analysis of the proposed sedition provisions and other areas of major concern in the Bill. The Gilbert + Tobin Centre of Public Law paper says the laws are more extensive and invasive than those in the US and Britain. "In the absence of a constitutional or statutory human rights framework ... there is a heightened risk that the Bill's restrictions on human rights will be disproportionate to the threat posed by terrorism."



Exploring the genesis of genius: the child writer

Professor Christine Alexander is exploring juvenilia – the youthful writings of professional authors. She is one of a handful of international scholars pioneering this new field in literary studies, an interdisciplinary approach that draws as much on education, psychology and history as it does on English studies.

With the assistance of an ARC Discovery grant, Professor Alexander from the School of English has recently added to her published work in the area with *The Child Writer from Austen to Woolf*.

“The importance of the formative years of a writer has been recognised since the Romantic period,” Professor Alexander said. “Despite this and the current surge of interest in children’s literature – that is, writing *for* children – only a handful of scholars have turned their attention to literary juvenilia, or writing *by* children.”

There’s a wealth of material to be gathered: published and unpublished manuscripts ranging from the secret journal to the poem in a school magazine, an adolescent love story or the letter home. Some children, like the Brontës, create elaborate imaginary worlds that remain with them well into adulthood as a source of inspiration; others, like Byron or Browning, reject their early writings in search of an individual voice. Some talented young writers became published celebrities such as Marjory Fleming, a young Scottish girl who died before

she was nine, and Daisy Ashford who achieved immortality at nine with her hilarious novel *The Young Visitors*. Other discoveries, such as the unpublished manuscripts of the Rossetti or MacDonald children, raised in eminent artistic and literary milieus, provide insight into the social construction of childhood, the nexus between gender and different types of creativity; and the epistemology of the child.

Such writings of the formative years of an author are testimony to the development of the authorial self – a witness to the early creative life and to the social and historical context in which it flourishes. Professor Alexander plans to work on Australian juvenilia next, looking at writers such as Tim Winton or Les Murray. She recently located some early writings of Nobel laureate Harold Pinter.

She hopes her work will provide insight into former young geniuses but also assist in understanding our own young talented and

gifted writers. “It’s good to nurture gifted children, but I think we have to be careful not to impose too many academic structures and requirements on them,” Professor Alexander said. “Verbal and imaginative play is as important as physical play.”

This study will also bring a new perspective to our understanding of the past. Since children learn by imitation, their early writings represent a microcosm of the larger adult world. They disclose the concerns, ideologies and values, because their voices are usually uncensored and they are free to ignore the socially constructed expectations of an adult audience.

Professor Alexander teaches an honours and MA course on children’s writing and the professional skills of editing juvenilia. She is also Director of the Juvenilia Press project, an international research and teaching initiative, hosted by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences: www.arts.unsw.edu.au/juvenilia/ ♦

The Child Writer from Austen to Woolf is the latest book exploring juvenilia by Professor Alexander. In one of the five chapters Professor Alexander has contributed to this book, she explores the role of play in literary apprenticeship through a culture of family magazines written by Charlotte Brontë, Lewis Carroll, Virginia Woolf and their respective siblings. “Collaboration was vital to the creative development of these young writers,” Professor Alexander said. She hopes her new book and future research will continue to profile childhood writings as an important new area of literary research. *The Child Writer from Austen to Woolf* is co-edited with Juliet McMaster and published by Cambridge University Press.

Beware the **baby boomer tsunami**

The ageing of Australia's population presents unprecedented challenges for Australian society. But perhaps of greatest significance is the shift in the values and priorities of older Australians, a shift which challenges traditional notions of old age and family obligations, according to a recent national quantitative and qualitative research study by Dr Diana Olsberg of the School of Sociology and Anthropology and colleague Mark Winters.

The study revealed that desires for independence, consumer and lifestyle choices increasingly take precedence for many older Australians, particularly the desire to have flexibility in housing and lifestyle during their later years. Whether to sell and spend, or sell and move to a location with better lifestyle opportunities, the prevailing attitude was the same: after years of hard work, they have earned the right to enjoy the fruits of their labour in any way they choose.

"It is the so-called baby boomer tsunami that will overturn ideas of old age," said Dr Olsberg, the director of the UNSW Research Centre on Ageing and Retirement, "in the same way that this generation has transformed conservative mores of individual identity and family strictures over the past half century."

Longevity, changing family relationships and family structures, new forms of identity formation, material aspirations and social expectations, greater social mobility and social diversity were contributing factors, according to the study's respondents.

More older people are living alone and loving it, and home ownership is the conduit to lifestyle choices. Home owners spoke of their homes as offering them a diversity of choices for the future, four out of five

Social mobility has increased, there is less family interdependence and family relationships have become far more complex, sometimes subject to greater tensions

indicated that owning a home means that one is free to make decisions about how one lives, and that it represents an investment for the future. Three-quarters also saw their home as an asset that they could sell or borrow against to provide for their needs in old age, whether for basics such as healthcare or for lifestyle pursuits. It is here, Dr Olsberg suggests, that the foundations of traditional family obligations will be seriously tested because the evidence suggests that in many cases people are prepared to use their greatest asset, the family home, to achieve those desires.

Making lifestyle a priority is no longer the domain of young singles with high disposable incomes. The study's findings pointed strongly to an emerging retirement class which expresses strong desires to enjoy the fruits of its labours in active consumption and lifestyle activities.

This is coupled with the very real transformations in people's ideas about family relationships and family obligations.

The question of agreeing to mutual living arrangements with children, either through cohabitation or the granny flat option, was met with animated articulations of disdain and dismissal. "Although some recognised these arrangements would be to mutual financial benefit, they were dismissed out of hand by the vast majority of respondents," Dr Olsberg said.

Many respondents were openly critical of their family relationships. Many codified their criticism using the modality of humour. "Never in a million years would I consider moving in with my children," one woman said. "One of us would be gaoled for murder."

"I could live with my daughter as we have a good relationship," another woman said, "but I'd have to get rid of her husband as he and I don't get on".

Some respondents referred to past experiences of living in extended family situations. Typical of these responses were:



Courtesy of Cathy Wilcox, Sydney Morning Herald

"I wouldn't consider it. I have vivid memories of my boyhood when my grandfather lived with us and how demanding he was of my mother"; and "I would never do that, I saw what happened in my family when my grandmother moved in with us."

When the older respondents talked about shared living of the past, they appeared to demonise the grandparents and speak of the suffering of their parents:

"...so we had my grandfather living with us, an old pig he was too. My father hated it most of all."

While the family remains the strong foundation for their identity for many, the notion of a universally strong and supportive family structure has diminished.

Dr Olsberg believes that the research demonstrates that social mobility has increased, there is less family interdependence and family relationships have become far more complex, sometimes subject to greater tensions.

Created family structures arise through a range of mechanisms: divorce and serial marriages create blended families, and there are single parent families, childless couples, same sex couples and transformations within traditional ethnic families, all of which replace the previously dominant nuclear family.

"People's greater expectations for retirement lifestyles and their growing recognition that they may increasingly have to fund their own old age have contributed to an attitude of "put yourself first because you deserve it", she said. "The desire to leave assets to the next generation seems to be diminishing."

Many respondents said their children had told them to go ahead and spend their money, but others stated they felt their children had expectations about inheriting the family home. On the basis of this research, there are indications that the expectations of baby boomers and of their children – that they will inherit the family home – will not be realised. ♦

Ageing in Place: intergenerational and intrafamilial housing transfers and shifts in later life is on the AHURI website: www.ahuri.edu.au/global/docs/doc920.pdf.

Commuting on the information highway

By Mary O'Malley

A novel way to beat idle hours on buses and trains is under development by UNSW researchers. The intelligent wireless protocol for public transport networks is designed to give passengers cheaper online access and lower power consumption.

Called OCEAN (On-board Communication Entertainment and Information), the protocol can be embedded in chips and placed on board buses and trains, allowing the vehicles to create a communication network.

Associate Professor Mahbub Hassan of the School of Computer Science and Engineering heads the research team behind OCEAN.

Unlike other mobile wireless internet services, he says, this one is based on an on-board mobile router that acts as a gateway between the passengers and the internet or passengers in other buses and trains.

"The distance between a passenger's device and the on-board mobile router is very short so therefore is much less taxing on battery power," Professor Hassan said. "If other services were used, the passenger devices would need more power to connect to a distant wireless base station outside the bus or train, and this would deplete the battery much quicker."

Our protocols are intelligent. They can learn from previous histories about which buses or trains are coming soon and which they can connect with. They can even allow for delays in traffic

He said that if buses and trains co-operate in relaying data to each other, the cost of communication could be very low compared to other wireless services.

One of the key technologies behind the innovation is Wireless Multihop. Each vehicle would carry a small routing device that 'talks' to any bus or train passing by. As one vehicle passes, the commuters' computer automatically connects with the next one passing by.

"Our protocols are intelligent," Professor Hassan said. "They can learn from previous histories about which buses or trains are coming soon and which they can connect with. They can even allow for delays in traffic."

"Our computations using a metropolitan bus network show that there would always be three or four buses within contact at any time."

To avoid network congestion, the research team is working on a method for understanding user's typical behaviour. Called semantic compression, the system profiles the user, determines the kinds of programs and information they normally access and filters their internet search so that only the most relevant data pops up.

"Public transport cuts down pollution, conserves energy and eliminates traffic congestion," Professor Hassan said. "We must do everything possible to make public transport more attractive so it is used by more people." Another benefit of this form of on-board communication infrastructure is that it will enable remote video surveillance of public transport vehicles, leading the way to unprecedented passenger safety and security.

"Passenger and other vehicle devices will simply connect to the on-board local area network and start using the internet just like the home or office," he said. "Although this architecture sounds very simple, it does raise several issues in networking and data management disciplines which must be resolved for on-board mobile computing to really take off."

"Firstly, any error or outage in the wireless link will immediately affect a large number of users. And link outages in such systems can be frequent and long lasting, for example when a train goes in and out of tunnels."

"Secondly, traffic from large numbers of users can easily overwhelm

the wireless link. Thirdly, the population of the network is very dynamic. Passengers are getting on and off the vehicle all the time. Caching or hoarding data and providing personalised delivery of relevant information for such a dynamic user base is a challenging task."

The project is a focus of an Australian Research Council-funded research collaboration between the computer network and service-oriented computing research groups led by Associate Professors Hassan and Boualem Benatallah.

"We take an integrated approach," Professor Hassan said. "By integrating techniques from both networking and data management disciplines, we aim to develop powerful solutions and concepts for effective and efficient on-board access to global information sources and services."

"Our ultimate goal is to contribute generic techniques and concepts for effective and efficient on-board access to global information sources and services such as weather information, stock quotes, and infotainment. These concepts and techniques will have wider application scope, such as aeronautical, maritime and terrestrial public transport systems." ♦



“Creationism in a tuxedo”: Archer leads the charge

By Dan Gaffney

Shoehorning ‘intelligent design’ into science classes would put Australia’s future at risk by undermining kids’ thinking skills and blunting the minds of the next generation of scientists. That’s the direct warning from UNSW’s Science Dean, Mike Archer.

So concerned is he that he is spearheading a coalition representing 70,000 Australian scientists and educators who recently condemned the proposal in an open letter to the media. “It’s creationism in a tuxedo,” Professor Archer says of intelligent design, which argues that some features of the natural world are so complex that an intelligent designer must have made them.

Intelligent design (ID) recycles a 200-year-old idea first proposed by British theologian William Paley. He likened a complex life form to a watch discovered on a beach, claiming that its inherent complexity implied the agency of a divine watchmaker – an intelligent designer. Alternative explanations for such elaborate aspects of the natural world were, in Paley’s view, simply impossible. “The marks of design are too strong to be got over,” Paley argued in his book, *Natural Theology*. “Design must have had a designer. That designer must have been a person. That person is God.”

The self-proclaimed born-again Christian and US President, George W Bush, gave the ID movement a boost recently by saying that intelligent design could be taught alongside evolution in science classes in American schools.

A few days later, Federal Education Minister Brendan Nelson bewildered Australian scientists and educators when he said that parents should have a choice about whether children were taught ID, which is being marketed by its proponents as an alternative explanation to natural selection, the model of evolution proposed by Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace in 1858.

Although the minister later amended his initial comments to say that philosophy or religion classes might be a better place to teach ID, he had by then given the issue both headlines and credibility.

“The minister was very humanly led astray by some slick marketing for intelligent design in the form of a US-funded DVD,” Professor Archer said. “Once he became aware that this was gobbledygook and creationism in a tuxedo, he shut the door on suggesting that it could have a place in science classes.”

Nevertheless, Christian schools quickly grasped the opportunity. Carolyn Kelshaw, the executive officer of Christian Parent Controlled Schools group, which educates 22,500 students in 85 schools across Australia called for a “robust” examination of different theories in science classes. Some schools were openly considering discussing ID in science classrooms and the principal at Pacific Hills Christian School in Sydney’s northwest said the school was planning to teach ID as part of science.

The head of the prestigious King’s School, Dr Tim Hawkes who saw the DVD on ID, also lent his support, saying that he supported discussion of ID in his school’s science classes. The Campus Crusade for Christ, which made the video, plans to distribute it to thousands of Australian secondary schools. “There are undeniable weaknesses within Darwin’s theory of evolution, and these must be acknowledged honestly,” Dr Hawkes said. “Failure to do so would mean an abrogation of our responsibility as educators.”

Catholic Archbishop of Sydney, Cardinal George Pell, was another to express his agnosticism about Darwinism during a speech to the National Press Club: “We don’t want a simple dogmatic teaching of evolution,” he said. “We would want teachers to talk about the enormous, significant problems in the evolutionary history.” While Cardinal Pell conceded that “evolution explains a lot of things,” he also said that “it’s there to be replaced or improved – there are many things it doesn’t explain.”

Professor Archer says Cardinal Pell’s argument is based on a false dichotomy. “He assumes that if science hasn’t found an explanation for particular structures in the world therefore we must assume that God must be the explanation,” Professor Archer said. “It’s not a case of one or the other. A third alternative is that science

hasn't yet understood how a particular structure developed."

Macquarie University's Paul Davies agrees. "The fact that scientists can't explain absolutely everything at this particular time doesn't mean that we need miracles," Professor Davies told ABC radio. "Of course there are gaps in our understanding of biological evolution – it all happened a long time ago. In the future we may well explain some of these gaps, but just saying 'God did it' is absolutely no help at all, and it's quite pathetic I think, both theologically and scientifically."

Wedging God into areas that science hasn't explained puts God in a vulnerable position, Professor Archer warns.

"The problem for theologians who support intelligent design is that as science continues to reveal the mechanisms that underlie the natural world – as it has for hundreds of years – then what happens to the God that was wedged into the gaps in our knowledge? He'd have to be dug out and found another place to be shoved inappropriately. This approach insists on making God somehow testable, which is not what religion is about: it's about

To intrude religion into science classes would corrupt the idea of what science classes are, and worse, to potentially throw the door open to any number of religions or unscientific ideas from astrology, to spoon bending, to alien abductions

revealed truths, it's about beliefs, and it's about questions of the purpose of the universe."

Scientists and teachers who balk at the idea of admitting ID into science classes do so fundamentally because it fails to meet scientific criteria. "Intelligent design isn't science," Professor Archer said. "It relies upon miracles and intervention by supernatural beings. It isn't based upon scientific evidence or principles, and there is no way to test the idea, primarily because it is religion. To intrude religion into science classes would corrupt the idea of what science classes are, and worse, to potentially throw the door open to any number of religions or unscientific ideas from astrology, to spoon bending, to alien abductions.

"At that point there'd be no point in having a science class – science would have to pack up and find a corner somewhere to survive, and I don't think that is in the interests of our children or the future of Australia."

The pressure to adopt ID into science classrooms is coming from the Discovery Institute, a well-funded conservative Christian think-tank in the US that uses lobbying and public relations tools in a bid to sway public opinion and convince policy makers to admit its ideas into the school curriculum. It hopes to win a case before the US Supreme Court that would uphold the constitutionality of

teaching ID in public school biology classes.

Through its 'Teach the Controversy' campaign, the Discovery Institute depicts evolution as "a theory in crisis" in an effort to paint the scientific establishment as closed-minded. In the same vein, it portrays ID critics as seeking to stifle new ideas that allegedly challenge the scientific status quo.

In a wider context, the ID movement is another battlefield in the American culture wars that polarise conservatives and progressives on a range of defining issues including abortion, homosexuality, privacy and censorship. While the ID movement's legal-political imperative is to remove US constitutional barriers to the teaching of creationism in schools, it appears to be aimed at what its proponents view as the perceived immoral materialism of modern science. A 1999 Discovery Institute fundraising pamphlet claims that its overall goal is "to defeat materialism" and the "materialist world view" as represented by evolution, and to replace it with "a science consonant with Christian and theistic convictions".

Yet the Vatican recently censured Christian fundamentalists who reject Darwin's

evolutionary model, saying the faithful should listen to what secular modern science has to offer. Cardinal Paul Poupard, head of the Pontifical Council for Culture, warned that religion risks turning into "fundamentalism" if it ignores scientific reason. In a Vatican press conference, Cardinal Poupard said the Genesis description of how God created the universe and Darwin's theory of evolution were "perfectly compatible" if the Bible were read correctly. "The fundamentalists want to give a scientific meaning to words that had no scientific aim," he said.

Professor Archer believes that the proponents of ID will ultimately fail to have their idea taken up in the formal science curriculum in Australia. Nevertheless, he views the debate as an opportunity for science to re-engage with teachers, parents and the wider public, by redefining what is and isn't science.

Back in the classroom, he warns that science students who spend time on ID will ultimately be wasting their time. "There won't be questions about intelligent design in the science HSC, there will be questions about science," he said. "So to whatever extent science students are having time taken on their science classes being taught intelligent design is time wasted. I think parents would want to be very concerned about that." ♦

“There is nothing frightening about the evidence for evolution”

A range of academic staff responded to the following questions on ID:

- ◆ Proponents of 'intelligent design' (ID) assert that some living structures are so complex that they are explicable only by the agency of an imagined and unspecified 'intelligent designer'. What is your response to this assertion?
- ◆ Scientists have expressed concern that 'intelligent design' (ID) might be taught in any school as a valid scientific alternative to evolution. Do you share their concern? Why/why not?

Staffan Kjelleberg
School of Biotechnology and
Biomolecular Sciences

The intelligent design theory or philosophy cannot be experimentally scrutinised and verified, and it is not born out of new hypotheses that derive from experiments and which can be tested again. So it is a belief rather than a scientifically based discipline and an argument between two such fundamentally different frameworks is meaningless.

Everything evolves and changes into other forms. What seems perfect or optimally complex is almost certainly not so. It would appear that the ID proponents believe that what we see now, in a particular place, is how it will always be. So the intelligent designer would therefore only seem to cater for how it is now, for the assertion to be valid.

Using model systems for evolutionary studies, such as micro-organisms, we can track very precisely how mutations happen and how these lead to profound changes in physiology and function. The "irreducible or specific complexity" is expected from these genetic observations. What ID proponents observe and marvel over is not a product that cannot be generated by evolution, and hence it cannot be used as a basis for opposing processes such as random mutagenesis and natural selection.

Michaelis Michael
School of Philosophy

As a claim about the natural world, the theory of ID is either false or at best as yet unsubstantiated. The progress that we have made in understanding our world is a reason to think this claim is false. There is no scientific reason to believe this doctrine. It is not a viable scientific theory at the moment but the

► doctrine of intelligent design has pretensions as a scientific theory. This is one reason to suspect that what is on the agenda is not the scientific attempt at understanding the world but rather the bolstering of a religious world view.

We ought to be worried by the clamour to teach such non-science as a part of the science curriculum. Education involves learning respect for the truth. Science is our best attempt to discern the truth.

Bruce Milthorpe
Graduate School of Biomedical
Engineering

Intelligent design is like any other faith-based system: it is just a belief, not a science. History is littered with such justifications for higher beings, which all have proved to be eminently explicable by series of very basic laws.

Very complex systems can be built on the basis of aggregation of very simple systems. Modern computers are an example. Certainly living things aggregate and modify their behaviour in very complex manners, but they are all explicable on the basis of assemblage of simpler systems.

A theory is only acceptable scientifically if it can be tested. ID cannot be tested independently (you have to assume the higher being exists to show it exists). Therefore ID is a belief and belongs in theology. It is dangerous to allow science to be polluted by belief.

Robert Stening
School of Physics

As a Christian I find the promulgation of ID to be dangerous to the Christian cause. It is an example of the ‘God of the gaps’. Presently scientists have not explained in detail the functioning of some “irreducibly complex” systems, so an intelligent designer must be invoked. The danger is that if people place faith in this designer, then what will they do if some wretched scientist comes along with a perfectly feasible scientific explanation? Their faith will be severely challenged.

It would seem undesirable to spend time in the science classroom discussing unscientific theories about origins. They need all the time they have to comprehend the science, which is often difficult and complicated.

Whereas the astrophysicist will examine in detail the spectra of starlight, the Christian will continue to say with the Psalmist: “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.” And the Christian will say the same thing when looking at these irreducibly complex systems. It is truly amazing how God has set up our world so that a system as complex as a human has evolved.

Ben Saul
Faculty of Law

Intelligent design theory is a pseudo-scientific reincarnation of creationism, which disguises



History is littered with such justifications for higher beings, which all have proved to be eminently explicable by series of very basic laws

biblical accounts of the origins of life as scientific theories. No question of freedom of expression is involved in this debate. Believers in ID are free to discuss their ideas publicly. What is objectionable is its attempt to legitimise untestable spiritual beliefs by cloaking them in the language and methods of science, even though its claims cannot be proved or tested by any known scientific methods. It is telling that proponents of ID feel the need to legitimise their spiritual beliefs by appealing to the rational discourse of science, as if their beliefs are not convincing enough on their own terms.

Elsbeth McLachlan
Spinal Injuries Research Centre,
POW MRI

Most living creatures are extremely complex and even the most intelligent humans who have studied them don't understand the basis for this complexity yet. This doesn't mean that humans are unintelligent.

The point raised in Q1 would be an excellent one for schoolchildren to debate. However, if ID were to be taught in science classes, the scientific method would have to be followed and I doubt that there is any evidence for the ID opinion. This would tend to reinforce evolution as a likely explanation.

It is sad that people have to grasp at straws when there is nothing frightening about the

evidence for evolution. It is entirely compatible with religious faith.

John Schuster
School of History & Philosophy
of Science

In science there is never any reason to invoke a big daddy organiser to solve our problems – when we do that the real science stops, because there is an end to the dynamic of problem solving, evidence seeking, and theory building/ revising that is the life of a science. In short, the understanding of why ID ain't science cannot be conveyed by invoking this or that philosopher's abstract and impotent formula for 'the scientific method'. Some degree of acquaintance with the dynamics of the sciences, and historical examples thereof is one of the beginning steps toward wisdom, and power of rational judgement, in the face of highly organised religious intrusion into the institution of science.

Trevor Cairney
Master of New College and School
of Education

As a Christian I have a strong belief in a creator God. As an educator, I have concerns about the push for ID to be taught as science. While believing in an intelligent designer, I have an open mind about scientific theories that seek to explain how the universe was created. I also believe that good science and faith positions can co-exist.

Peter Slezak
School of History & Philosophy
of Science

Mike Archer and colleagues urge that ID not be taught in biology, meaning, of course, that it should not be taught as truth. But this is a bad model for teaching 'correct' theories too. Authoritative pronouncements from scientists will not help to diminish the appeal of such seductive theories, particularly because ID is not simply a leap of faith as Archer suggests, but offers arguments and evidence. These are better discredited by being confronted with evolutionary biology rather than being prohibited in the classroom.

As GW Bush might say, Archer and his colleagues “misunderestimate” ID [which] appeals to unexplained phenomena at the heart of our current science. Although this is only the incompleteness of all scientific research, a cosmic version of the same design argument has been advanced by respectable scientists. While open to serious and familiar objections, such views cannot be excluded from the explanatory enterprise on principled grounds. It is difficult to see how the goals of a scientific education could be better achieved by prohibiting a consideration of the apparent intellectual force of such arguments. ♦



Congratulations and criticisms: the future of the UN

By Susi Hamilton

When Fariborz Moshirian speaks about the United Nations, you could be forgiven for thinking that he is a political scientist, rather than a leading finance academic.

“We need to strengthen the UN, so that it can reasonably achieve what it was established to do,” said Professor Moshirian, from the School of Banking and Finance. “We need to give it financial clout. The UN should have the power to get money from its members, instead of hoping that they meet their obligations. It should also have more say when it comes to international security and world peace.”

Professor Moshirian was one of 25 policy makers, NGO representatives and academics who were invited by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to meet the Deputy Secretary-General of the UN, Louise Frechette, in a round-table discussion during her recent Sydney visit. It is his expertise in international finance, which extends to global organisations such as the UN, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which makes his views in demand.

“I congratulated her on the gains that have been made by the UN this year, as part of its 60th anniversary,” he said. “The UN is getting recognition as an institution that has the potential to address some of the key challenges facing humanity.”

Professor Moshirian also has some robust criticisms, many of which are in his most recently published paper ‘Global financial markets integration and Millennium Goals’, which has just been published in the *Journal of Multinational Financial Management*.

The conclusions do not make for easy reading. Professor Moshirian acknowledges that the UN’s Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – broadly, human rights, world peace and the eradication of poverty – will probably not be achieved by their target date of 2015. The price tag of those goals is \$100 billion dollars a year.

While many developed countries have failed to come up with their share of that amount (roughly 0.07 percent of GDP), the UN is powerless to enforce them to meet their pledges. “This is where we need to either give the UN more power, or alternatively re-examine its role and the way the financial resources of the current world economy are allocated,” he said.

Those matters aside, he argues that these laudable aims could be easily achieved if three things happened: if military expenditure were decreased from its current level of \$1000 billion per year, if trade were liberalised (including the end of agricultural subsidies, now at \$350 billion per year) and the introduction of an integrated financial system that incorporates a global single currency (saving \$91 billion per year).

“We have to look at some values and cultures, because they are all related to each other,” Professor Moshirian said. “We are not just being idealistic. We shouldn’t discount the evolution we are going through.

There is a financial as well as a moral imperative for achieving these MDGs.

“The Secretary-General has already pointed

out that human rights, world peace and the eradication of poverty are interrelated,” Professor Moshirian said. “If these goals are achieved, there would be much more financial stability. When you have world peace, the stock market flourishes. You are more confident to invest in developing countries because you are confident in the outcome.”

In a truly globalised, integrated system, income disparities between developed and developing countries would be reduced. In addition, the large, international institutions and agencies such as the World Bank, the IMF and the UN would have a more co-ordinated approach.

“We have a unique opportunity to make a difference to billions of lives worldwide. We have only ten years to capitalise on political will if we are to reach the MDG’s 2015 goals.” ♦

Professor Moshirian has recently been made one of the five editors of the *Journal of Banking and Finance*, considered the foremost international journal in banking and the fifth major finance journal in the world.

Professor Fariborz Moshirian has also been awarded a prestigious guest professorship in Sweden. He has been named the Bertil Danielsson Guest Professor for 2006 and will visit Stockholm for two weeks and deliver seminars and lectures to academics and the business community, the Bank of Sweden and other government institutions.

The flight of the termite is now

By Sarah Wilson

One in five Australian houses will be affected by termites at some time – leading to a national annual repair bill estimated at between \$700 and \$800 million each year. With this in mind, homeowners in south-eastern Australia should know that December is the most critical time of the year to detect termite infestations, as swarms of the winged insects take to the sky.

“The nests of these secretive insects usually go unseen but their Achilles heel is their need at this time of the year to take flight en masse to mate and set up new homes elsewhere,” said Dr Chris Orton, Director of the Centre for Entomological Research and Insecticide Technology (CERIT) at

“The flight of the termites will usually be triggered by hot, humid weather, often late in the afternoon or early evening when a storm is brewing,” Dr Orton said. “Termites have a dire need for water. Their cuticle is susceptible to drying out and without enough water they desiccate readily, so the release of the winged reproductive forms in humid conditions enhances their chances of survival, though fortunately, relatively few survive due mainly to predation.”

Huge numbers are released from mature colonies and it is these colonies that are critical to detect as they cause the most damage to buildings.

Now is a crucial time for people to spot the source of the winged insects and address the problem while it is visible. If you see termites flying from a point in or near your house, you need to collect some samples and seek professional help

UNSW. Over the next few weeks, winged reproductive forms of the two most destructive south-eastern Australian termites (*Coptotermes acinaciformis* and *Coptotermes frenchi*) will leave their nests to form new colonies – and that’s when they are at their most visible.

“If you see lots of flying insects near your house at this time, you should have a good look around to find out where they are coming from,” Dr Orton said. “If you find them flying in great numbers from a hole in a tree or a building, it most likely means a nest of termites is living nearby and you need to have it checked out.” From a distance, a flight of termites sometimes resembles a plume of smoke rising into the air.

“It is important not to disturb the nest, as any disruption may cause the termites to relocate to a nearby area. The best way to deal with the problem is to call a pest controller.

“Termites are, for the most part, a huge hidden problem. They are capable of eating away structural timbers such as frames, walls, roofs and floors and causing significant damage to buildings, often before being discovered.

“Termites eat cellulose, a complex carbohydrate found in wood. When eating through a beam of wood, or the trunk of a tree, they usually leave a thin shell as protection from the outside world and in particular a dry atmosphere,” Dr Orton said. “Raised concrete slabs and trees are favourite areas for termites to nest as they provide ideal conditions.

“Now is a crucial time for people to spot the source of the winged insects and address the problem while it is visible. The key message is – if you see termites flying from a point in or near your house, you need to collect some samples of the insects and seek professional help.” ♦

Bite-size chunks

- ◆ Flights of the termites usually occur from mid-November to mid-December in the Sydney area. The actual flight will most likely be triggered by hot, humid weather.
- ◆ If you see a swarm of termites coming out of a hole, mark the spot and contact a pest controller. Don’t be tempted to tackle the problem yourself. Termite treatment is a job for an experienced professional.
- ◆ Collect several (ten is enough) of the flying termites in a small jar or container so that the pest controller can confirm their species. Add enough methylated spirits to just wet the inside of the jar. This will preserve the insects until they are identified.
- ◆ Talk to your neighbours. If your neighbours have termites, this increases the chances of you having termites too.
- ◆ Have your house inspected for termites every year. There are advantages in joining with your neighbours to get your houses checked over by the same pest controller.
- ◆ Check Australian internet sites for information on termites. Information on international websites generally does not apply to Australian species, products and conditions.
- ◆ With a noted increase in fierce storms in recent times, more trees are falling down. If this happens in your yard, check the inside of trees for a honeycomb effect caused by termite infestation. Eucalypts are particularly susceptible.
- ◆ ANY termites discovered in or around your house should be checked over by a professional pest manager. ♦



Conversations @ the Studio

The iCinema Centre for Interactive Cinema Research, a leading research body concerned with challenging the boundaries of cinematic experiences, has recently installed its long-anticipated permanent display in the Powerhouse Museum's new gallery, dubbed *Inspired! Design Across Time*.

Established in 2001, iCinema is a joint venture of the College of Fine Arts and the School of Computer Science and Engineering and brings together researchers and postgraduate students in new media, digital aesthetics, sociology of art, film theory, multimedia design, computer science, artificial intelligence and software/hardware engineering.

Focusing on research and development into immersive digital interactivity for cinematic, mobile and home theatre applications,

iCinema is at the forefront of new cinematic technologies.

iCinema's latest creation, *Conversations @ the Studio*, is now open to experience in the new decorative arts gallery at the Powerhouse Museum. The display allows visitors to explore the traditional craft of glass blowing, using state-of-the-art interactive technology as they watch a 360-degree projection on a custom built hemispheric dome.

The vision fills the dome and allows viewers to be right in the middle of the blowing and shaping action of a glass studio. "It's the next best thing to actually being there," iCinema director Jeffrey Shaw said. ♦

Conversations @ the Studio is on now at the Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo, Sydney.

Getting seditious: social movements in Australia

By Alex Clark



More than 200,000 protesters marched through capital cities and regional centres around Australia last month as part of a national day of action against the Federal Government's proposed workplace reforms.

The hundreds of simultaneous rallies across the country sent a message that social movements in Australia are alive and well. Dr Sarah Maddison from the School of Politics and International Relations believes, however, that the government's proposed sedition laws mean the act of speaking out is increasingly under threat.

"Citizens are responsible for keeping politicians accountable between elections, to raise contentious issues and demand that they be addressed," said Dr Maddison, co-author of a recently published book, *Activist Wisdom*. "That role is now under fire to the great detriment of Australia's democratic health."

Activist Wisdom explores the impact that social movements have had on Australian society and politics over past decades. From the battle by gay and lesbian groups to change Tasmanian discrimination laws, to the damming of the Franklin River, to the women's movement that has achieved extensive change, activists have been responsible for consistently placing issues on the Australian agenda.

"People often relegate these examples to history, whereas activism keeps them bubbling along, keeps them on the government's agenda and in the broader public conscience," Dr Maddison said.

In writing the book, Dr Maddison and co-author Sean Scalmer interviewed 19 campaigners about their experiences in a range of social movements. Their interviewees challenge the stereotype of activists as chardonnay-sipping socialists out of touch with ordinary Australians.

"Many activists have paid a huge personal price for their commitment," Dr Maddison said. "They are passionate about the cause they are struggling for and about the good that will come from their struggle, not just for themselves but for many."

Dr Maddison describes herself as an activist academic who has been involved in a range of social movements over the years but she believes now more than ever that neo-liberal democratic states such as Australia are making it clear they don't like to be challenged.

"This government has taken a series of steps to stifle the legitimate challenging of the state," Dr Maddison said. "I believe the work of activists is important and needs to be valued in an academic sense but also, more broadly, activists need to be recognised as significant political actors. Australia would do well to listen a little more closely to them and value the work that they do."

"I don't think there has ever been a time in which citizens in a democracy can sit back and be complacent about the health of their democracy." ♦

Dr Sarah Maddison is a lecturer in the School of Politics and International Relations. *Activist Wisdom* is published by UNSW Press and is available at the UNSW Bookshop.

**By David Gonski, AO
Chancellor**

Council met on 7 November 2005. Following the meeting, Council met with members of the University community for refreshments in the Clancy Auditorium Foyer.

2006 UNSW Budget and 2007–2008 forward estimates

Council approved the budget, welcoming the new format which included an executive summary detailing situational assessment, high-level forecast results, assumptions and risks; the budget details and the Asset Management Forecast – a new broader Capital Projects Forecast including maintenance. Council noted that central expenditure would be held at 2005 levels. The new budget model allows for strategic readjustment to support Faculties and some Faculty funding will be increased. Council requested an update in April 2006 on the impact of Voluntary Student Unionism, the impact on Faculties of forward plans for Faculty reserves, actual ISFEE and LFEE enrolments and progress with the Asset Management Forecast in 2006 and beyond.

Appointed Members of Council: terms of office and procedures for appointment

Council agreed to recommend to the State Minister staggered terms for its six ministerially appointed members, in the spirit of the National Governance Protocols, and in line with the staggered terms for the graduate elected members approved by the new UNSW By-law. This will allow the

four-year terms to be overlapped by two years for two sets of three members.

Council also approved procedures for recommending persons for appointment to the six ministerially appointed and the two Council appointed positions. The new By-law has created a 22nd Council appointed position. An invitation to Council for nominations for appointment to this position was made, and to fill the casual vacancy from 1 January 2006 to be created by the resignation of Ms Catherine Harris, a ministerially appointed member since 1998. Council's Nominations and Remuneration Committee will consider the nominations received and make recommendations to Council.

Renaming of Scientia Building

Council approved that the Scientia be renamed the John Niland Scientia Building, given Emeritus Professor Niland's contribution to UNSW as Vice-Chancellor from 1992 to 2002. Council particularly noted his vision in establishing and implementing an extensive master-plan exercise to transform UNSW physically into a world-class University, which culminated in the creation of the award-winning Scientia. It is anticipated that the renaming ceremony will be held in conjunction with the annual University Reception in December.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (UNSW Asia)

Council approved the internal title of Deputy Vice-Chancellor (UNSW Asia) for use by the President, UNSW Asia, noting that the President will be a formal member of the University's Senior Management Group.

Emeritus Professor arrangements

Council approved that the title of Emeritus Professor will be available to all Professors of the University who have demonstrated a significant period of distinguished service to the University, not just those who have served 10 years or more. Council also approved changes to the Emeritus Professor Committee and administrative arrangements.

Annual Performance Report

Due to a lengthy agenda, Council agreed to discuss at its 12 December meeting the Annual Performance Report, which included the 2002–2004 UNSW Performance Indicators and the Annual Reports on the Research Integrity Program, the Staffing Profile and the NHMRC New Project Grant Outcomes.

Grievance resolution policies and procedures for staff and students

Council welcomed the new policies and procedures and agreed that they would lie on the table until December, to allow some further consultation with Council members.

Council minutes

Council minutes 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.

Report of 1 November 2005

The Board congratulated Professor Hilmer on his appointment as Vice-Chancellor from June 2006, and Professor Greg Whittred for his appointment as the first President of UNSW Asia.

The Board considered and approved revisions to the new proposals from the Faculty of Engineering. The proposals were subsequently approved by Council on 7 November.

We endorsed the new Grievance Policy and Procedures for Staff and for Students and a new policy for the conduct of UNSW centres, both research centres and program centres. A proposal arising from the Engineering Faculty to mount a one-year trial of a credit-bearing academic literacy program for students identified as requiring

substantial assistance in the area was approved.

The Board also approved new programs at ADFA aimed at high-achieving students, named the Chief of Defence Force Students Program, in the Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Business, Bachelor of Engineering and Bachelor of Engineering/Bachelor of Technology. The Board approved a new program, Bachelor of Commerce Bachelor of Economics, and a substantial revision of the Bachelor of Commerce and the Bachelor of Biological Anthropology. Postgraduate course programs to be offered at UNSW Asia will include: Master/Graduate Certificate in Commerce, Master of Commerce (Extension) and the Master/Graduate Certificate in Professional Accounting, Master of Professional Accounting (Extension).

The Vice-Chancellor commented positively on the verbal report given by the AUQA team at the end of their visit.

The Board's hot topic for November was community engagement. We discussed how this important aspect of University activity could best be integrated into community life and measured. The Board predicted that Makybe Diva might win the Melbourne Cup!

The Academic Board's website is now live at www.academicboard.unsw.edu.au.

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**

Policy is not a one-way street: Bettina Cass, Social Policy Research Centre

By Louisa Wright



Alex Clark

Bettina Cass, prominent social researcher, policy advisor and one-time Dean of Arts at the University of Sydney, is excited about the opportunities attached to her recent appointment as Professorial Fellow at UNSW's Social Policy Research Centre.

"It's a chance to do full-time research and to work with excellent researchers – that combination doesn't often happen," she said. "In 30 years as an academic, I have done teaching and had management responsibilities, and I have spent some time in policy advice and policy making. Now I feel it's very important to have a research place in which to develop and extend new research which is crucial for the times."

That policy work included positions as director of the Social Security Review for the Federal Government in the late 1980s, part-time commissioner of both the NSW and the Australian Law Reform Commissions and memberships of government and non-government social and health organisations.

The legacy of this blend of academic and policy roles has been to confirm in Professor Cass an unshakeable drive to combine the best possible evidence-based research with a constant dialogue between researchers, policy makers and people on both sides of the coalface: those implementing the policy at grassroots and those who are the recipients of the policy outcomes.

"The really important matter is to understand the experience of those who work with the participants in services and also those in state and federal governments, to understand what they see as the challenges," she said. "Working

on policy is not a one-way street."

Some researchers see their work as a bridge between policy makers in government and those both implementing and using social services. Professor Cass sees it more as a constant conversation or interaction: "It's important to ensure the conversation is always taking place."

The research topics of her 'constant conversations' are many and varied, and reflect her concerns about policy issues crucial to the times.

Close to her heart is the issue of carers and the plus and minus sides of the caring balance sheet. One project concerned with healthy ageing looks at the flow of resources and care-giving, both for and by older Australians.

"The contribution older Australians make is crucial," Professor Cass said. "It includes caring for grandchildren and spouses, voluntary work in the community and other aspects of social wellbeing. We will seek a better understanding of these social and economic benefits and identify the policies which enable that participation to succeed."

A second project is more specifically about carers aged up to 25, a large and unstudied group of young people caring for a family member, usually a parent but sometimes a disabled sibling. The Australian Bureau of Statistics puts the figure at almost 350,000 people under 25 who provide some care in this way, with about half of them under 18.

"They tend to have poorer outcomes in terms of schooling, tertiary training and employment," Professor Cass said. "But we will also measure their valuable contribution to the resilience of their

family's ability to cope. It's crucial to have policies to support them – flexible schooling opportunities, assistance in employment and respite care for the person they are caring for."

Professor Cass will undertake another project looking at welfare reform across Australia, the UK and the USA. The conditions under which sole parents and low income parents are able to care for their children, the differing arrangements of compulsion to enter paid work, the types of income support and child care will be compared.

"Although all three countries are considered liberal welfare states, their policies in these areas differ substantially in the ways in which low income families are treated," she said.

A further area of investigation concerns the social determinants of health and wellbeing, looking at whether the risks of poor health are clustered within lower income families, shared by partners and by children, and how families and local communities mediate the health impacts of socioeconomic disadvantage.

A consistent theme throughout Professor Cass's research interests is that of resilience: how do young carers find the resilience to cope particularly with regard to policy supports? How do poor families mobilise resources to create better outcomes for their children? In what way do the contributions of older Australians add to the resilience of the people in their care? How might that resilience be harnessed and how might governments create the policy frameworks and investment in programs to support care-giving, both social and familial? It's all grist to the research mill at the SPRC. ♦

Christmas and cultural diversity

By Geoffrey Brahm Levey

Christmas, they say, comes but once a year. Judging by the controversy that now engulfs the festival each season, this may be just as well. In Australia, as in many other countries, December has come to mark a new and highly spirited tradition – an annual public debate over the degree to which Christmas should be publicly recognised and celebrated in a diverse society.

Last year saw a huge outcry over Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore's apparent downgrading of the city's Christmas decorations. In previous years, we've had controversies over Christmas parties, carol singing, and Nativity plays at state kindergartens and schools. While the exact issue may vary from case to case, gone are the days when the campaign was about 'putting Christ back into Christmas' in the face of its growing commercialisation. Today, the issue is whether Christmas should be kept in Christmas.

What should we make of these attempts to respond to our society's religious and cultural diversity? What does a commitment to multiculturalism imply for this kind of public celebration? Is modifying Christmas celebration out of sensitivity to our cultural diversity, as Prime Minister Howard put it during last year's debacle, simply "political correctness from central casting"?

Unfortunately, the public debate typically frames the issue in terms of whether Christmas celebration in its various forms is offensive to non-Christians. This leads people to adopt one of two, equally misguided, alternatives: clumsy attempts to downgrade government involvement in Christmas festivities (which, ironically, tends to cause great offence to a sizeable chunk of the Christmas-loving population), or else denials that there is any issue to address.

The 'offending minorities' debate is a furphy. Who, after all, could be offended by a pretty tree and lights, a rotund and jolly man bearing gifts, joyous song, and expressions of goodwill to all? Generally, the only people who are offended at Christmas are some committed Christians who feel that its Christian meaning is being *lost* amid the commercialism.

We can better see what is at stake in the Christmas controversy by thinking instead in terms of the sensibilities of 'acknowledgement'. Consider a mundane example: that moment when two colleagues or acquaintances approach and pass one another in the corridor or the street. At that moment, the conditions of sociability and of sharing space demand a human exchange. Unless the relations between the parties are frayed or damaged, that exchange is typically some form of

greeting. It may be, and usually is, fleeting and perfunctory. And no-one expects or desires a "How are you?" to elicit anything but an equally perfunctory response. But the transaction is vitally important all the same. Although commonly framed as politeness, the most fundamental property of this exchange is the reciprocal signification that you are aware and accept that the other person is there.

It is precisely this elementary form of acknowledgement that is missing in the traditional public celebration of Christmas. Every public institution in the country proceeds as if everyone does participate in the festival. What is needed is some expression of awareness and acceptance that there are others about in our community who do not observe Christmas in any respect. To fail to do this much, is to treat such groups as if they were not here or do not belong here.

Such acknowledgement or 'signification of presence' may take various forms. One concerns the officially imparted greetings of the season. Here is one instance where we should follow the American lead and encourage our public institutions to extend *Season's Greetings* or *Happy Holidays* or even *Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays*. This does seem an apt way for public authorities to greet *all* the people.

Each version conveys what needs to be gestured, namely, that not everyone observes the Christmas festival. Similarly, it seems appropriate that 'Christmas parties' held under public authority auspices (at the very least) should be referred to as 'end-of-year' or 'holiday parties'. The revelry may be the same, but it's the gesture that counts.

Our University also has a part to play here. UNSW prides itself on being a progressive institution. Its student body is among the most culturally diverse in the nation, and its staff could not be too far behind in this respect. Both the present Chancellor and the newly appointed Vice-Chancellor are Jewish. Cultural sensitivity and respect are written into the University's various codes of practice. So perhaps the time has come for UNSW also to lead the way in acknowledging, rather than ignoring, this diversity come Yuletide.

Season's Greetings and Happy Holidays to all! ♦

Dr Geoffrey Brahm Levey of the School of Politics and International Relations steps down this month as co-ordinator of UNSW's program in Jewish Studies after nine years.

