

# MONASH NEWS



NEWS FROM THE CAMPUSES OF MONASH UNIVERSITY  
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MONASH  
UNIVERSITY



## The synchrotron another step closer

Work on the Australian Synchrotron at Monash University will begin almost immediately following the State Government's announcement last month that construction company Thiess would design and construct the building to house the machine. Vice-chancellor Professor Peter Darvall said the announcement signalled the start of an exciting period in Monash's history. "The Australian Synchrotron at Monash will be an essential tool for scientists who want to be at the leading edge of research into drug development, information technology, biotechnology and mineral processing," Professor Darvall said. The synchrotron will be built on Monash land at the corner of Blackburn and Wellington roads, Clayton.

# New drug may slash health cost

## MEDICINE

The huge cost of treating people with arthritis and other inflammatory diseases such as multiple sclerosis could be cut significantly by the development of a new drug at Monash University.

Arthritis alone cost Australia's economy up to \$9 billion in 2000, according to a recent Access Economics report.

Monash researchers are working on a compound that blocks the negative effects of a protein that is fundamental to the development of inflammatory disease. Macrophage Migration Inhibitory Factor (MIF) activates cells to release harmful products into sites of inflammation and may also promote the growth and accumulation of harmful cells.

Associate Professor Eric Morand, from the Department of Medicine at Monash Medical Centre, and Dr Magdy Iskander, from the Department of Medicinal Chemistry at the Victorian College of Pharmacy, have developed molecules that work as potent inhibitors of MIF.

Dr Morand said drugs targeting MIF have the potential to replace steroids that are widely used to treat inflammatory disease, or enable lower doses to be used. "They may not cure inflammatory disease, but they would suppress it safely for as long as the drugs were taken."

MIF is one of a family of proteins called cytokines that are involved in

inflammatory diseases. As such it is an emerging therapeutic target.

There are other ways to treat these diseases, but they can have serious side effects or are so expensive that they are not available in Australia.

"Our technology has the potential to make the first 'small molecule' cytokine antagonist, which could replace these treatments with a convenient tablet," Dr Morand said.

He and Dr Iskander have established a company, Cortical Pty Ltd, to commercialise their research.

Dr Iskander said work was continuing on designing compounds that would block MIF effectively.

"We are conducting optimisations to increase the potency of these compounds and make them into potential drugs," he said. "We expect it will take 18 months to two years to optimise the molecules, then we will go to the pre-clinical phases and then clinical trials."

Cortical has already developed drugs that successfully bind to and disable MIF in animals.

— Penny Fannin

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Photo: Melissa Di Ciero

## Focus on the family

A falling fertility rate and an ageing population are cause for Federal Government concern. Monash University researchers Dr JaneMaree Maher (left), Dr Lise Saugeres and Dr Maryanne Dever are investigating the reasons behind the declining birth rate and have come up with some surprising revelations. Read the full story on page 7, as well as the results of new research on young people's attitudes to marriage and the problems facing those who have been brought up in state care when they leave.

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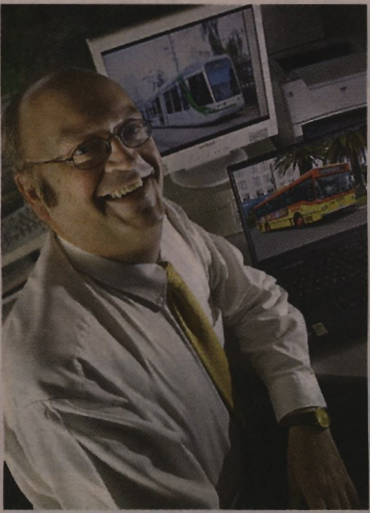
### ARTS

#### Drawing expert takes up residence

British professor Deanna Petherbridge is the latest artist/designer in residence at Monash's Faculty of Art and Design at Caulfield.

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Professor Graham Currie.  
Photo: Melissa Di Ciero

## Spotlight on public transport

### ENGINEERING

Australia's first chair of public transport, Professor Graham Currie, has started work at Monash University.

An internationally recognised consultant in his field, Professor Currie will play a crucial role in ensuring Melbourne meets its increasing transport demands over the coming decades.

He said the new role was particularly significant given Melbourne's growing portfolio of major events, such as the 2006 Commonwealth Games and the 2007 World Swimming Championships.

"An effective public transport system is vital to any major city, and even more so when that city is home to events that attract visitors in the millions," Professor Currie said.

"Clever cities use the experience gained from hosting events as part of planning for more effective urban transport in the future."

He said the aim of the chair, based in the Department of Civil Engineering, is to increase learning and knowledge within the public transport industry through education and research.

Professor Currie's post is jointly funded by Monash University, the Victorian Government Department of Infrastructure, Vicroads and the Bus Association of Victoria.

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## Costello opens chambers

Federal Treasurer Mr Peter Costello officially opened the Monash University Law Chambers, located in the heart of Melbourne, on 21 July.

The Treasurer is accompanied by Monash vice-chancellor Professor Peter Darvall (left) and Monash deputy vice-chancellor and Law dean Professor Stephen Parker.

The chambers, at 472 Bourke Street, provide law postgraduates with computer laboratories, modern conference rooms and meeting spaces, as well as online access to all Monash libraries.



Photo: Melissa Di Ciero

## Science Centre recognised for sustainable architecture



**Learning about living:** One of the exhibition spaces at the Monash Science Centre.

### DESIGN

The Monash Science Centre, located on the university's Clayton campus, has won the 2003 Sustainable Architecture Award presented recently by the Victorian chapter of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA).

The \$3.9 million building was designed by Williams Boag Architects and opened to the public last July.

Monash Science Centre exhibition manager Dr Corrie Williams said the award was significant both for the university and the wider community.

"Ecologically sustainable design (ESD) was a fundamental part of the project, and an environmentally responsible outcome has clearly been achieved," she said.

The centre is based around ESD principles, including manual and automatic louvres for ventilation,

thermal chimneys with reversible fans and underfloor hydronic geothermal heating, using the nearby lake as a heat sink.

Materials used were assessed on their renewability, recyclability, reusability, functionality and durability, as well as their embodied energy and environmental impact in terms of toxicity.

"The building is a delight to work in," said Dr Williams. "It is a very inviting space, and the staff are all learning about 'living' in it."

Other environmental considerations include internal zoning, passive heat collection in the teaching wing and direct digital control technology to manage the building's electrical, mechanical, fire, lift and security systems.

Mr Peter Williams of Williams Boag said the award, by a highly qualified independent jury, acknowledged the

firm's efforts to provide responsible advice to the university. The award also points the way to the design of buildings in the future.

"A building such as the Monash Science Centre provides quality evidence that environmentally sensitive design can be progressive and address contemporary architectural concerns," said Mr Williams.

The Monash Science Centre serves as an educational and research centre and houses world class exhibitions such as *Wildlife of Gondwana: the History of Life in Australia - the last 3.8 billion years*.

The centre is on the shortlist for the RAIA's national awards, to be judged in Hobart in October.

- Karen Stichtenoth

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### IN BRIEF

#### Understanding Islam

Monash University Malaysia has signed an agreement with the Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia to collaborate on future activities, which will promote the understanding of Islam.

Institute chairman Tan Sri Dr Ahmad Sarji Abdul Hamid said the memorandum of understanding (MoU) was the first it had signed with an English-speaking and non-Islamic university. "It will pave the way for the two institutions to carry out combined research, exchange scholars and documents and organise joint seminars and conferences," he said.

Pro vice-chancellor at the Malaysia campus Professor Bob Bignall said the MoU would also help Monash draw on the institute's expertise in developing a postgraduate program in Islamic banking and finance.

The first collaborative activity will be the International Islamic Banking Conference, to be held at the Monash Prato Centre in Italy on 9 and 10 September.

#### Award double

A trio of Monash art and design graduates won two prestigious Boating Industry Association awards presented in Melbourne last month.

Mathias Poom, James Tien and Albert Yang were recognised in two categories for their creation of an interactive CD-ROM aimed at promoting careers in the boating industry to students in years 10 to 12.

The award-winning work was the result of a joint initiative between the Victorian Government's Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development and Monash's Department of Multimedia and Digital Arts in the Art and Design faculty.

Master of Multimedia and Multimedia Design course coordinator Mr Dennis Masseni said the work the students had produced was outstanding.

#### Opposition in focus

Political opposition in Malaysia came under the spotlight at the inaugural seminar of the Monash Malaysia Focus Group at the Monash Conference Centre in Melbourne recently.

Keynote speaker Professor Shamsul A. B. said broader discussion of the issue had generally focused on opposition to the ruling party and voting patterns.

But Professor Shamsul, who is director of the Institute for the Malay World and Civilisation, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, and a Monash alumnus, said this approach was too simplistic.

"We need to be aware of differences within the parties that make up the National Front ruling party, the differences between those parties and also the divergent opinions within the opposition parties themselves," he said.

#### Jerusalem fellows

Three scholars from the esteemed Mandel School for Social and Education Leadership in Jerusalem have taken up roles at Monash's Australian Centre for the Study of Jewish Civilisation.

Dr Michael Fagenblat, Ms Melanie Landau and Dr Nathan Wolski joined the centre after an agreement was reached between the Centre for Advanced Professional Educators at the Mandel School and Monash.

They have taken up newly created Monash University Jerusalem Fellows Lectureships, funded by the Pratt Foundation, the Besen Family Foundation and the Bori Liberman Family.

Student Accommodation Available

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## Monash first in food industry business management program

Australia's first business management program for executives in the food industry will begin at Monash next year.

The postgraduate program is designed to boost the leadership, direction and future survival of Australia's food industry, which generates \$26 billion in exports annually.

The Monash Food Business Management program is an initiative of the \$102 million National Food Industry Strategy (NFIS), a Federal Government project that aims to increase export growth, innovation, skills, quality and sustainability in the Australian food industry.

Monash was selected following a competitive tender process.

Professor Max King, deputy dean of the Faculty of Business and Economics and director of the Monash Research

Graduate School, praised the NFIS for its foresight and initiative in promoting professional education to ensure the future of the industry.

Dr Lawrie Dooley of the Department of Marketing will lead the team that will deliver the one-year intensive course, which is starting next year. Successful participants will obtain a tertiary qualification in food business management - either a graduate qualification if they already hold a tertiary qualification or an executive certificate if they do not.

- Robyn Anns

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# Preserving Colombia's disappearing turtles

## BIOSCIENCE

South America is the setting for a research project by a Monash University PhD student who is studying two of the world's most endangered turtle species.

His findings will be used to manage sea turtles, which although under threat, are still found in significant numbers in the Pacific Ocean off the coast of Colombia.

Mr Diego Amoroch, a PhD researcher in Monash's School of Biological Sciences, is investigating the genetics, population structure and feeding ecology of olive ridley turtles and black turtles.

He has been interested in the turtles since 1988 when he was director of the Sanquianga National Park.

He was concerned that domestic dogs were attacking the creatures and

that local communities were over-exploiting them.

"Olive ridleys and black turtles have been drastically depleted over the years," Mr Amoroch said. "They have been harvested for meat, their eggs have been collected for food, and they have been trapped by shrimp trawlers."

He said nothing was known of the genetic structure of nesting olive ridleys or where the black turtles feed.

"We want to know if they belong to the turtle populations that nest in the Galapagos Islands or the north of Mexico, or if they are a different population altogether."

Mr Amoroch will also genetically test the olive ridleys to see if the turtles nesting in the north in Utria National Park and in the south in Sanquianga National Park are separate populations.

"It's important for management

purposes that we establish the facts," he said. "If the populations are different and the northern colony is on the verge of being wiped out, we won't be able to use the olive ridleys from the south to replenish the area."

"We also want to find out what the black turtles eat and whether young turtles have a different diet to adults. By learning more about these aspects, national and regional recovery plans can be based on the most available, accurate and reliable scientific data."

Mr Amoroch will be conducting field surveys in the turtle nesting and feeding grounds from now until December 2006.

— Penny Fannin

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**Turtle watch:** Mr Diego Amoroch (left) who is on the trail of Colombia's endangered species.

# Making hospital wards wireless

## HEALTH

In hospital wards across Australia, thousands of medical tests are ordered daily by doctors and nurses trying to establish what ails their patients. Blood tests, X-rays and dozens of other procedures are booked and completed and the results returned to clinical staff.

But clinical decisions can be delayed because of the time required to transfer paperwork between hospital departments and then have the results relayed back to the relevant medical staff. This can lead to patient care being fragmented and poorly coordinated and to decisions on treatment or discharge being delayed.

However, a program developed by Monash University's Centre for Health Services Operations Management (CHSOM) in collaboration with NEC and Southern Health aims to reduce these delays.

The *mWard* program is designed to speed up communications between hospital staff by making communication technology systems on hospital wards wireless. It will allow doctors and nurses to make clinical decisions about patients more efficient by quickly delivering patient information.

The program will initially be used to establish a wireless information technology environment in a 26-bed neurology ward at Monash Medical Centre.

CHSOM director Dr Liza Heslop said the first part of the *mWard* project would investigate how effective wireless technologies might be in making the day-to-day clinical operations of a hospital ward more efficient.

"Clinicians presently experience disruption to their workflow as they carry out the everyday clinical work of patient care, because the systems for decision-making, record-keeping and documentation are not readily accessible," she said.

At the moment, clinical health workers spend a significant amount of time and effort seeking information from medical charts and other sources to make the next key decision in a patient's treatment regime.

Some estimates suggest that nurses and doctors spend more than one-third of their time doing support work such as recording and synthesising information.

"Poor access to information such as diagnostic results can mean delays in clinical decision-making," said Dr Heslop. "Delays contribute to higher hospital costs due to additional bed days and, on an annual basis, these extra bed days represent a burden to hospital budgets."

"The *mWard* project will explore how wireless technologies, such as laptops, cordless phones or personal digital assistants could be used in a hospital ward to improve clinical decision-making."

"The beauty of wireless technology is that if doctors and nurses are carrying laptops, they can access a patient's test results or request new tests while at that patient's bedside. This allows them to make clinical decisions much faster."

— Penny Fannin

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**Wireless wards:** Monash Medical Centre staff test hand-held equipment with Dr Andrew Ruthfield, Southern Health chief information officer, at the launch of the *mWard* project.



**Sitting in judgement:** Dr Henry Wu is far from complimentary about the technical merits of in-flight videos.  
Photo: Greg Ford

# In-flight entertainment fails to take off

## TECHNOLOGY

Airline passengers are being subjected to in-flight entertainment that is technically second rate, according to a Monash University academic.

Associate Professor Henry Wu, from the School of Computer Science and Software Engineering in the Information Technology faculty, reached his verdict after judging entries in a worldwide competition.

He was asked to sit on an international panel and view short news and entertainment videos submitted by 12 airlines for the Avion Awards, presented annually by the World Airline Entertainment Association.

He was required to mark tapes in the 'short haul' category for originality, suitability, content and balance. But he said it was in a fifth category — production value — that his expertise in digital video coding and visual communications was brought to bear.

After viewing the videos both at home and in laboratory conditions, he concluded that overall the technical quality of the programs was not very good.

"They may have been digitally produced, but in the aircraft it is analogue copies that are replayed," he said.

"To make matters worse, the airlines favour the American NTSC video format, or 'never the same colour twice', as I like to call it."

The PAL system used in Australia is better."

Dr Wu rated Qantas as the leading entry technically, although he rated the entry from US airline Delta as the best overall.

But he said even the best videos suffered from blurring, colour bleed, ghosting and snowy pictures.

As for sound, he discovered that none of the entries actually had a genuine stereo soundtrack, although against a background of aircraft noise, this fault would be difficult for passengers to detect.

The airline rated worst by Dr Wu was American Airlines.

"It's time the airlines upgraded their customers' in-flight entertainment experience," he said. "There is little point in paying big production houses to make the programs when the broadcast versions are technically inferior."

"Sound is another issue the airlines could address. Motorola have produced a genuine stereo headset for in-flight use, while Sony are working on a noise cancellation system that would make programs much easier to hear, if the airlines were prepared to invest."

The 15th Avion Awards will be presented in the US city of Seattle in September.

— Richard Ewart

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# Study to reveal how the brain sees

## PHYSIOLOGY

Stick insects are well known for their ability to remain undetected by disguising themselves against a background of twigs. But what is poorly understood is how the human brain is capable of seeing the stick insect and other camouflaged objects once they begin to move.

Dr James Bourne, an Australian Research Council postdoctoral fellow in Monash University's Department of Physiology, is investigating which parts of the brain are involved in this process. He is particularly interested in 'breaking camouflage', a phenomenon that allows humans and many other animals to see an object move even if it is hidden against a background with the same visual characteristics.

Dr Bourne is analysing the electrical activity of cells in the brain's visual cortex to identify the computational steps that allow animals to perceive the shape of an object. To do this, he is isolating certain cells, temporarily inhibiting their function, and then recording whether the brain is still able to detect a moving camouflaged object.

His earlier research found that a number of cells in the primary visual cortex of the marmoset monkey's brain were involved in this process. He is now investigating which cells within the primary visual cortex are capable of detecting moving camouflaged objects.

He also wants to know which 'higher-order' visual areas are involved in analysing moving camouflaged objects and whether connections from the neurons of these areas are responsible for the primary visual cortex being able to detect camouflage.

"No-one understands the strategies used by the brain to break camouflage," Dr Bourne said. "This study could help elucidate these strategies and make it easier to explain why people with lesions of the visual cortex, such as stroke patients, experience vision loss."

"We need to understand the basic science of how visual processing works before we think of trying to repair damaged areas using stem cells or electrophysiological mechanisms such as prostheses that mimic retinal cells and help process and send information to the brain."

— Penny Fannin

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## Development could stem migrant flow, says expert

### ECONOMICS

The immigration policies of rich countries should be designed to foster the economic development of poorer countries, economist Professor Bob Rowthorn said at the launch of the Monash Institute for the Study of Global Movements recently.

In his talk 'Development and Distribution in an Open World Economy', Professor Rowthorn said that the only way to relieve the pressure of a growing pool of would-be immigrants was to promote economic development in their native countries, to make them more desirable places in which to live.

"The primary external responsibility (of rich countries) is not to the millions of would-be immigrants clamouring at their gates, but to the countries from which these people come. The economic development of poorer countries is not just a moral imperative, it also has a practical dimension," he said.

Professor Rowthorn, chair of the Faculty of Economics and Politics at the University of Cambridge was one of a series of speakers at a half-day conference to launch the institute.

Mr Alexander Downer, Minister for Foreign Affairs, officially launched the institute, which he said was an invaluable contribution to promoting knowledge and understanding of globalisation and its benefits to Australia.

The Monash Institute for the Study of Global Movements AM, directed by Professor John Niewenhuysen AM, brings together researchers from the faculties of Arts, Business and Economics, Law, Education and Art and Design to generate research and scholarship in the area of globalisation and the global movement of people, ideas and resources.

Other speakers at the conference included the former Monash academic, Professor Peter Singer, now at Princeton University, who spoke about the moral and ethical aspects of globalisation, and Mr Tan Sri Musa bin Hitam, the former Malaysian deputy prime minister and minister for education, who spoke about the movement of ideas and education.

— Diane Squires

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## Monash student is Young Victorian of the Year



Young Victorian of the Year: Mr Hugh Evans pictured with children of South Africa's Embo Valley.

A Monash student with a passion for helping the poor has been named 2003 Young Victorian of the Year.

First-year law/science student Mr Hugh Evans was awarded the honour in recognition of his public and community service on behalf of some of the world's most disadvantaged people.

In 2001, Mr Evans spent seven months working in the impoverished Embo Valley in South Africa. During that time, he managed the construction of a sports field and a community library and worked in an AIDS orphanage, where he established a child sponsorship program through World Vision.

He has just returned from South Africa, where he attended the official opening of the community facility he helped to establish.

Mr Evans has dedicated his young life to helping the poorest people in the world since he experienced the squalor of the Manila slums in the Philippines during a World Vision study tour as a 14-year-old schoolboy.

He has since established Australia's first youth-run aid organisation, the Oaktree Foundation, whose mission is to empower developing communities through education.

— Robyn Anns

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www.theoaktree.org

## New scholarships aim to attract high achievers

### EDUCATION

Monash University is aiming to attract Australia's highest achieving Year 12 students under a new scholarship scheme for 2004.

Ten Scholarships for Excellence will be offered to students who achieve the highest scores in their Year 12 studies.

The scholarships are open to students in Year 12 in Australia this year and will cover their HECS debt and provide an extra \$6000 each year up to a maximum of five years of study.

A separate Indigenous Scholarship for Excellence will be offered to the highest achieving student of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.

As a member of the Group of Eight leading universities in Australia, Monash has a reputation for groundbreaking teaching and research excellence, with specialists in hundreds of areas of study. The Group of Eight undertakes 70 per cent of all research conducted in Australian universities.

The Monash scholarships will allow students to study any undergraduate course they are accepted into at any of Monash's six Australian campuses.

A maximum of three of the 10 scholarships will be directed towards students wishing to undertake the Bachelor of Medicine/Bachelor of Surgery degree.

In a departure from the previous system, the new scholarships will be offered to students in

December, before the change of preference period begins.

Professor Merran Evans, chair of the committee that reviewed the Monash scheme, said the scholarships were designed to ensure high-achieving students perceived Monash as a high-quality university that encouraged and rewarded academic excellence.

"They offer far more options for the successful students, because they allow them to study any course across the university, provided they meet the normal entry criteria for that course," she said.

"Monash prides itself on preparing its students for lifelong learning. We are a truly global university with centres in London and Prato, Italy, and campuses in South Africa and Malaysia. We offer students extensive opportunities to study in an international context through these campuses and centres and also at our partner universities around the world."

The university will continue to offer faculty-specific scholarships for excellence and scholarships and support bursaries for disadvantaged students.

To apply, students can submit an application form online at [www.adm.monash.edu.au/ssd/sarb/schols](http://www.adm.monash.edu.au/ssd/sarb/schols), contact the Monash Admissions and Coursework Scholarships Unit on (03) 9905 2082 or email [scholars@adm.monash.edu.au](mailto:scholars@adm.monash.edu.au).

— Diane Squires

### SCHOOLS

#### Information night for behavioural neuroscience

Behavioural neuroscience is an exciting new biomedical science focusing on the biological basis of behaviour and cognition.

Monash is holding an information night for anyone interested in finding out about the Bachelor of Behavioural Neuroscience degree and career opportunities for graduates.

It will take place at 7.30 pm on Wednesday 27 August in lecture theatre south 1, building 64, Clayton campus. To register, email [psychology.enquiries@med.monash.edu.au](mailto:psychology.enquiries@med.monash.edu.au) or telephone (03) 9905 3968.

#### Engineering information evening

Year 10, 11 and 12 students are invited to attend a program that focuses on engineering courses at Monash and the professional and career opportunities available.

Speakers will include Engineering dean Professor Tam Sridhar, a current student and a graduate of the faculty.

Students will be able to talk with departmental advisers about course options, prerequisites, engineering double degrees and employment opportunities. The evening will include a tour of the faculty's teaching, laboratory and research facilities.

It will take place at 7.30 pm on Wednesday 3 September in lecture theatre C1, building 63, Clayton campus.

For further information, visit the Engineering web page at [www.eng.monash.edu.au](http://www.eng.monash.edu.au) and follow the links under 'News and events'.

#### Faculty of Business and Economics brochures

The Faculty of Business and Economics schools kit is now available and has been posted to all schools.

To receive additional copies of the kit or any of the brochures, contact Ms Charlotte Holden on (03) 9903 2958, or email [charlotte.holden@BusEco.monash.edu.au](mailto:charlotte.holden@BusEco.monash.edu.au).

#### International Application Day

International Application Day is for international students in Australia who want to know more about studying at Monash.

Course experts will be on hand to discuss undergraduate, postgraduate and research degree opportunities, as well as Monash pathway programs, Monash College and Monash University English Language Centre.

Specific information for international students about visas and Australian Government requirements, fees, entry requirements, student services and application procedures will be available. Students who bring their academic results will receive immediate assessment and can apply on the day to avoid the \$50 application fee.

International Application Day will be held this year on Saturday 30 August between 10 am and 3 pm at Monash University International Centre, Clayton campus.

For more information, contact (03) 9905 8540 or visit [www.monash.edu/international](http://www.monash.edu/international).



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# Taking care of rural business



Photo: Newsplix



If Australia's small to medium-sized businesses are to prosper, they need to take advantage of new technology. But without the right advice and guidance, firms risk wasting time and money, says Ms Cate Reilly, manager of the Monash Regional Centre for Information and Communications Technology (MRCICT).

It is widely acknowledged that small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a vital role in the economic prosperity of regional Australia.

Over the last five years, I have been closely involved with a large number of SMEs across Gippsland, in eastern Victoria.

Many of them are run by innovative, talented and entrepreneurial people, with a lot of skills and knowledge about their business, their customers and the market they operate within.

However, they are generally too busy working *in*, rather than *on* their businesses to be able to plan properly to make the most of new technologies.

In recent years, federal and state government business policies have become much more focused on SMEs' uptake of technology and the adoption of innovative processes to strengthen their market position.

In the global marketplace, SMEs face many more challenges than they used to, and their ability to remain competitive greatly depends on their effective adoption and application of technology to achieve greater efficiencies and improved market advantage.

Many of these SMEs may not be very familiar with modern electronic information processing technology because in general they have little time and even less money to invest in the necessary strategic planning for the uptake of new technology.

What is not in doubt, however, is that many are aware that technology does offer the potential to derive greater efficiencies in their business operation, assist in the development of new products and open up new markets.

But these firms are unsure of how to go about gaining the necessary knowledge to exploit these openings.

I have come across many SMEs that have 'spent on' rather than 'invested in' technology and, as a result, have not derived any real benefit. The 'dot-com nonsense' was a major contributor to this pattern.

During the boom, many businesses in Gippsland hired the services of web developers. When I subsequently did some research to establish what these businesses actually got from their websites, many expressed disappointment that they had not resulted in significant improvements.

In many cases, a website was built simply because

a web developer came knocking at a company's door. The result was off-the-shelf products that addressed some of the marketing and advertising needs of the business but often failed to deliver significant benefits and did little to improve customer service or internal processes.

Many of these SMEs might have been better off investing in a simple email system and using the net to distribute a newsletter.

It was during this time that I began working with Monash multimedia specialist Professor Laurence Dooley, who acquired considerable experience in Wales working on an EU-funded technology transfer project before coming to Gippsland.

Together, we devised a new technology transfer strategy that might help SMEs in regional Australia gain more benefit from technology they already had and to make appropriate investment decisions when developing and implementing new technology.

**"... many SMEs have 'spent on' rather than 'invested in' technology."**

Technology transfer is the process of transferring solutions into a company (based in our case on academic research and development) that will benefit its business.

These solutions could range from something as simple as raising awareness of new technology to developing a sophisticated new industrial process.

The new strategy, known as the Technology Transfer Gateway, has provided a whole range of fresh research opportunities for MRCICT and the wider Gippsland campus. It also offers academics from different disciplines the chance to engage directly with local industry and SMEs in particular.

As a result of securing funding from the Commonwealth's Innovation Access - AusIndustry Program (an initiative of Backing Australia's Ability) and the Faculty of Information Technology, we are now able to provide this much-needed technology transfer service to SMEs.

The mantra for the project is 'technology for business'.

Our first aim when assessing any company for technology transfer is to gain an appreciation of how the business actually operates, before considering which technology best suits that particular firm.

In this way, we believe the firm will be much better placed to be able to take advantage of the opportunities and efficiencies that new technology affords and so make a real difference in terms of economic growth, improved competitive advantage, and ultimately increasing employment opportunities.

The project provides SMEs with access to research and development expertise as well as resources. It also enables the university to work collaboratively with SMEs to develop their potential. As well, it provides academics with opportunities to undertake commissioned research and to identify needs for basic research.

Currently, staff from the university's science, engineering, business and computing areas are actively participating, the aim being to match closely the company's needs with the academics best suited to help them.

We are at a point now where we are beginning to set up the next phase of the project. This will involve using the processes and tools that have been developed and working in partnership with other regional universities so that SMEs across regional Australia gain access to this new and essential resource.

*The Technology Transfer Gateway is MRCICT's flagship project. For more information, see [www.mrcict.monash.edu.au/projects/TDGN.php](http://www.mrcict.monash.edu.au/projects/TDGN.php). Ms Cate Reilly is currently undertaking a research masters degree on a unified delivery strategy for technology transfer for SMEs in regional Australia.*

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Monash News welcomes contributions for this column from Monash University academics. Contact the Media Communications unit on +61 3 9905 9314.

## Reaping the benefits of new technology

Small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) in Gippsland, Victoria, are being targeted by a Monash University project that aims to improve their profitability.

The Technology Transfer Gateway has been established with the assistance of a Federal Government grant of almost \$440,000 and seeks to help SMEs identify the technology most appropriate for them.

Monash's Faculty of Information Technology is contributing \$160,000 to support the project and a further \$40,000 for MRCICT's general operations.

Project manager Ms Cate Reilly said the network provides free practical assistance in information and communication technologies to SMEs that register online.

"We have already audited more than 20 companies and begun 12 feasibility studies, three of which have already been completed," she said.

One of the businesses to seek assistance is a meat-packing company, which is aiming to increase its capacity by 2.5 times with the introduction of robotic technology.

"This project is in its early stages, but if it proves successful it has implications for the whole Australian meat industry in terms of making it more competitive in the international marketplace," Ms Reilly said.

Another operation seeking help is a family-owned transport firm, which is looking at introducing electronic record-keeping to make the company more efficient.

The Federal Minister for Science, Mr Peter McGauran, officially launched the gateway at Monash's Gippsland campus recently.

"Many businesses in regional Australia don't have access to new technologies, or don't know how to access what is available. This project will solve those problems for them," he said.

"The aim is to allow SMEs to make informed decisions about their future investments in technology. We can also assist them to acquire funding from a range of available programs," Ms Reilly said.

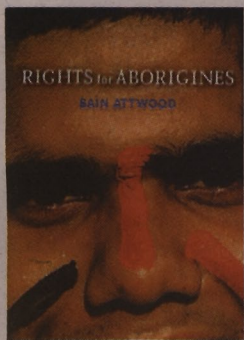
— Richard Ewart



Federal Minister for Science Mr Peter McGauran at the official launch of the Technology Transfer Gateway at Monash's Gippsland campus.



## INPRINT



## Rights for Aborigines

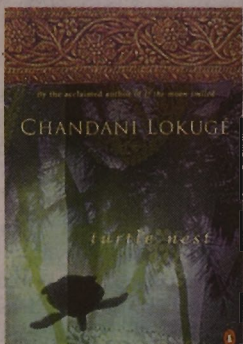
By Bain Attwood  
Published by Allen & Unwin  
RRP: \$39.95

In this groundbreaking work, Bain Attwood charts the century-long struggle for rights for Aborigines in Australia. He tracks the ever-shifting perceptions of race and history and how these impacted on the ideals and goals of campaigners for rights for Indigenous people. He looks at prominent Aboriginal and non-

Aboriginal campaigners and what motivated their involvement in key incidents and movements.

Drawing on oral and documentary sources, the author investigates how the two groups found enough common ground to fight together for justice and equality for Aboriginal people.

Bain Attwood is associate professor of history at Monash University.



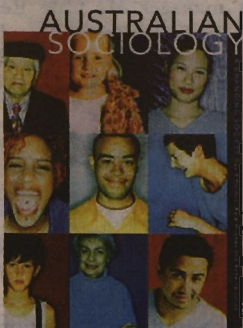
## Turtle Nest

By Chandani Lokuge  
Published by Penguin  
RRP: \$22.95

Aruni returns to Sri Lanka, the land of her birth, with a burning desire to discover the truth about her mother, the wild and exotic beach girl, Mala. Happy for the first time in her life, Aruni believes she has found the place where she truly belongs. But as the tragic story of Mala's life unfolds, Aruni finds that belonging makes its own relentless claims.

*Turtle Nest* is a compelling, disturbing novel by the acclaimed author of *If the Moon Smiled*.

Chandani Lokuge lectures in the School of Literary, Visual and Performance Studies in the Faculty of Arts at Monash University.

Australian Sociology:  
A Changing Society

By David Holmes, Kate Hughes and Roberta Julian  
Published by Pearson  
RRP: \$48.95

This book offers the concepts of sociology as tools to better understand and manage a rapidly changing society. The authors provide crucial historical perspectives and introduce sociological

theories within the context of contemporary debates to encourage students to think critically about the changes and challenges that characterise society at the beginning of the 21st century.

*Australian Sociology* also provides an interactive companion website designed specifically for the text useful for both lecturers and students.

David Holmes lectures in the School of Political and Social Inquiry at Monash University. Kate Hughes is a senior lecturer at Victoria University of Technology and Roberta Julian is a senior lecturer at the University of Tasmania.

## POSTscript

Written in 1880, *Niels Lyhne* is regarded as Danish writer Jens Peter Jacobsen's masterpiece. Australian-born Henry Handel Richardson was the first to translate the novel into English in 1896 and now, for the first time in almost a century, the book has been reprinted as part of the Monash University Henry Handel Richardson project.

Clive Probyn, who is professor of English at Monash University, and honorary senior research associate at Monash Bruce Steele have edited this new scholarly edition.

If you are a member of the Monash community and have a forthcoming book, contact [monashnews@adm.monash.edu.au](mailto:monashnews@adm.monash.edu.au).

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## From shopping bag to work of art



**Recycled art:** First-year sculpture students Ms Rae Easton (left) and Ms Helen Braun transformed plastic shopping bags into works of art.

Photo: Andrew Barcham

The humble plastic shopping bag could one day be a significant medium in the art world if the latest work by Monash University sculpture students is anything to go by.

First-year sculpture students in the Bachelor of Fine Arts/Bachelor of Visual Arts program were asked to use the unusual medium to create a head figurine.

Senior lecturer in sculpture Dr Dan Wollmering said that as well as introducing the students to different and unusual media, the assignment aimed to make them aware that almost any item could be used in sculpting.

Dr Wollmering first had the idea of using shopping bags in the mid-1990s while researching plastics as a material for use in sculpting. "I asked plastics companies to provide me with materials and experimented to see how they would react to different treatments," he said.

When the plastic bags are heated, they shrink and then harden as they cool, which means sculptures can be built up in layers to achieve the desired effect.

Dr Wollmering said that judging by the work completed by the students, plastic bags could well be used more frequently by sculptors in the future.

— Diane Squires

Drawing  
expert in  
residence  
at Art and  
Design

Deanna Petherbridge, Arnolfini professor of drawing at the University of the West of England in Bristol, is the latest participant in the Artist/Designer in Residence Program conducted by Monash University's Faculty of Art and Design.

Professor Petherbridge began her appointment last month and will be in residence until 25 October.

"Hand drawing is a very important part of the creative process and in stimulating the artistic imagination," she said.

"It is absolutely the basic activity for all creativity – the notion of the sketch is used even for music and science. As a great crusader for drawing, I am delighted that Monash pays so much attention to it."

According to Mr Kit Wise, coordinator of drawing at the Department of Fine Arts at Caulfield, the appointment highlights the growing international interest in drawing.

"This is reflected in the innovative and diverse program at Monash, which offers classes in fine and applied arts, design, visual communications and multimedia," he said.



**A crusader for drawing:** Professor Deanna Petherbridge.

Photo: Melissa Di Ciero

drawing, which will be published in 2003.

While at Caulfield, she will deliver guest lectures and contribute to a seminar program for postgraduate students.

She is also assisting with the curating of *Drawing 2003*, to be exhibited in the Faculty Gallery at the Caulfield campus from 9 October to 14 November. The exhibition will feature some her own work and a series of war drawings by Paul Gough, as well as work by other British artists including Akikio Usami and James Jessop.

Since its inception in 2000, the Artist/Designer in Residence Program has attracted respected artists and designers from around the world.

Participants stay on campus at the Faculty of Art and Design apartments in Caulfield and spend their time in the studio teaching, researching and lecturing.

The program has been designed to complement international study programs established by the faculty at the Monash Centres in Prato and London.

— Karen Stichtenoth

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[www.artdes.monash.edu.au/faculty/galleryindex.htm](http://www.artdes.monash.edu.au/faculty/galleryindex.htm)

## Dark secrets make for wicked entertainment

A darkly comic tale about suspect friendships and survival of the fittest is the latest play to feature in the 2003 Monash University Performing Arts season.

*Wicked Sisters*, written by award-winning Sydney playwright Alma De Groen and directed by Kate Gaul, begins its run at the Alexander Theatre on 11 September, with three evening performances scheduled.

Sisterhood is suspect and friends are false in this play about getting ahead, getting away with it and getting very, very wicked.

This story of deceit and intrigue takes place at a reunion of old friends

Judith, Lydia, Meridee and Hester, in the Blue Mountains. The friends meet following the death of Alec Hobbes, a scientific genius and wealthy husband of host Meridee.

The relationships between the woman and with Alec are shrouded in mystery.

While sitting in the ghostly chill of Alec's study, buried secrets suddenly erupt, raising issues about fidelity, his sudden demise and the inheritance he has left.

Adultery is on the cards and the sparks fly as the friends assess how well they really know each other.

The play stars Diane Craig as

Lydia, Lorna Lesley as Meridee, Barbara Stephens as Judith and Valerie Bader as Hester.

*Wicked Sisters* was shortlisted for the 2003 NSW Premier's Literary Awards.

— Karen Stichtenoth

## SHOW NOTES:

**What:** *Wicked Sisters*

**When:** 11, 12 and 13 September, 8 pm.

**Where:** Alexander Theatre, Clayton campus

**Who:** For bookings, contact the Monash Box Office on +61 3 9905 1111.



## Why many young people are rejecting marriage

Many young people are choosing not to marry or to have children because of their negative perceptions of their parents' relationships, according to a new study by Monash University sociologist Associate Professor Naomi White.

"Young people are aware of the high incidence of divorce," she said. "Many have experienced it in their own families, and they have a view about the permanence of relationships, which makes them rather wary."

While media reports have focused on women's reluctance to commit to marriage and having children, Dr White found that men had the same reservations.

"Young men's contribution to the decline in birthrates has had a very low profile, if it is mentioned at all," she said.

"But research has shown that the increased prevalence of divorce is associated with pessimism from both sexes about the possibility of having a stable, two-parent family."

"The young men interviewed in the study had also been exposed to the high rate of divorce, and so were less inclined to want to marry."

The study, which was published in the June issue of the *Journal of Sociology*, was based on interviews in Melbourne with nearly 40 young people ranging in age from 22 to 30.

It also found that young women were particularly hesitant when it came to having children because of the persistence of traditional gender roles in families.

Dr White said those she spoke to had felt that responsibility for domestic duties and raising the children had rested with their mothers.

"This was the case even when both parents had jobs and were working full-time," she said.

"The young women felt that if they were to have children, they would be burdened with domestic and child care responsibilities and would have to forfeit their careers."

"Their concerns were verified by the men's expectation that child care would primarily be their partner's responsibility."

But Dr White said these were not the only factors influencing the women.

Increased employment and educational opportunities and a cultural push towards individualism were also factors.

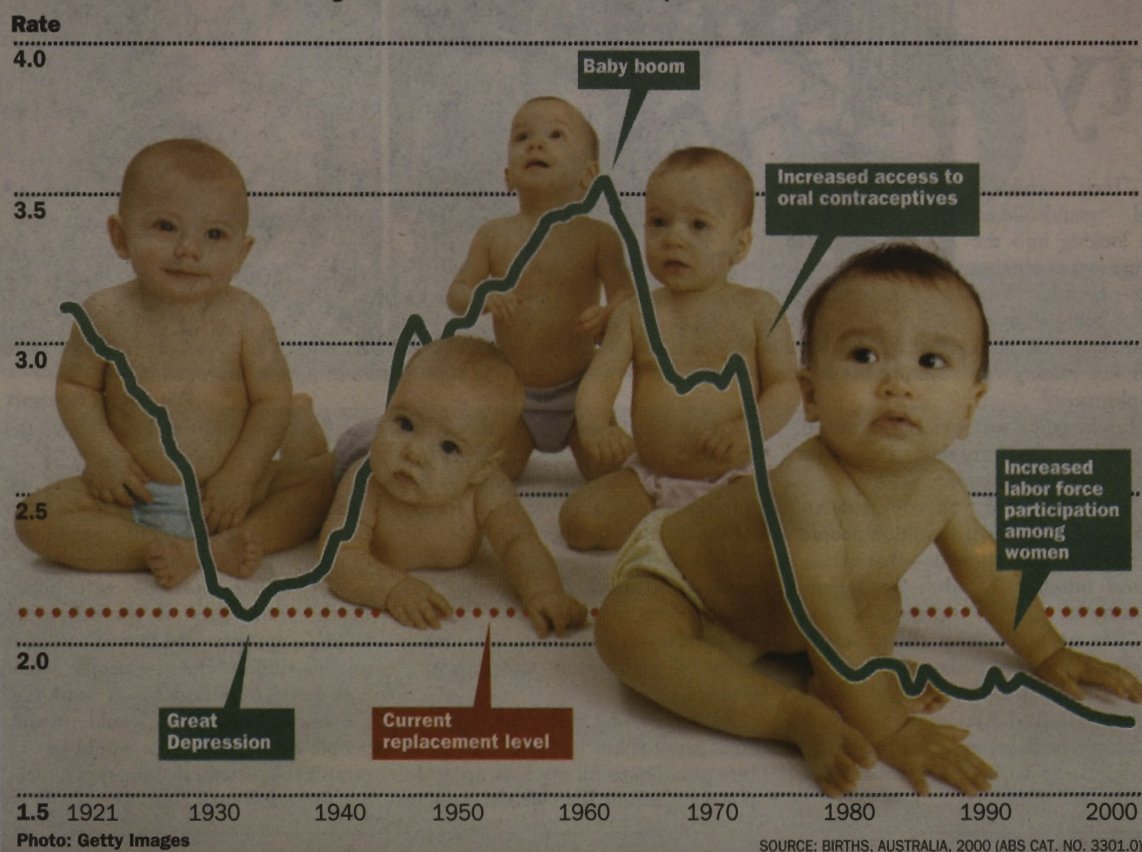
"While married men can maintain their existing salary rates and go on to achieve higher income levels, the opposite appears true for women," she said.

"Women's wage-earning capacity is positively affected in the short term by delaying marriage and in the long term by delaying childbirth."

— Diane Squires

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## Australia's fertility rate: babies born per woman



# New insights into the childless choice

A falling fertility rate equals an ageing population equals a shrinking tax base – hence the Federal Government's concern at Australia's 1.73 per cent birthrate. Monash University researchers are investigating the reasons behind the decline. **ALLISON HARDING** reports.

Australia's declining fertility rate is generally blamed on middle-class professional women refusing to take time out from their financially rewarding careers.

But a study by a team from the School of Political and Social Inquiry at Monash University has come up with some surprising revelations, revealing that paid maternity leave and policy initiatives such as the Federal Government's 'baby bonus' have limited impact on the decision to have children.

Preliminary findings suggest Australian women are far more concerned about access to long-term flexible workplaces, childcare availability and extended family support than with narrow and short-term financial benefits.

One of the team leaders, Dr Maryanne Dever, said the study, titled 'Gender roles, fertility and family: understanding the current downturn in Australia's birthrates', explored the ways in which individuals made their decisions whether or not to have children and how many to have.

Dr Dever, who is the director of the Centre for Women's Studies and Gender Research at Monash, believes the findings call into question current theories about falling birthrates and have implications for the formulation of policies aimed at arresting the decline.

"Preliminary findings show that initiatives such as maternity leave are not as relevant as the ongoing lack of opportunity for women who choose to have children," Dr Dever said.

"Factors including accessible childcare, social support and long-term workplace issues related to child rearing are significantly more important."

The project is questioning five groups of people – sole parents, parents aged under 25, women with three or more children, women who have chosen to remain childless, and younger adults who have clear preferences about whether or not to have children.

Dr Dever said that while most previous research into falling birthrates had looked at the numbers and not the causes, this study combined census data with interview material to provide a more in-depth and complex analysis.

"Policy-makers – and society in general – often draw on stereotypes and speculate on the causes, saying women no longer have the maternal instinct or are too career-driven to be mothers," she said.

And fellow researcher Dr JaneMaree Maher said that while society was concerned about the failure of middle-class women to reproduce, it criticised other groups of women who did help keep the birthrate in the positive.

"White, professional, middle-class women are exhorted to re-embrace and re-prioritise the nuclear family, domesticity and motherhood," she said. "But women who don't fit that model – such as single, lesbian, Indigenous or poor mothers – are either ignored or criticised."

All those interviewed agreed that the decision to have children was a difficult one to make. "It's quite clear that the women have significantly lowered their expectations of what the state will provide, and in the Australian workforce there remains the distinct perception that combining work and family is the woman's problem," Dr Dever said.

Another important factor related to blended families, with some women's decisions affected by whether or not their partners had children.

"In some cases, partners were older and had children from previous relationships, which impacted on how many more children were wanted – if any," Dr Maher said. "And child maintenance payments, which can take a substantial proportion of the partner's income, was another factor in their decision."

The study also revealed that the ability of friends and family to help with childcare was another factor in the decision-making process. One woman, for example, said the proximity of family was central to her decision to have a third child.

Dr Maher said she was surprised to find that women who were childless by choice held fairly traditional images of motherhood.

"Comments that mothers should be primary care-givers were typical, with the decision to have a child and use childcare being seen as undesirable," she said.

"This group often indicated they did not have enough of what they saw as the necessary attributes to raise children."

The study is due for completion by the end of the year.

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## More help needed on leaving state care

Federal laws should be created to protect young people leaving state care, according to a Monash University academic.

Dr Phillip Mendes, from the Department of Social Work, said the government needed to provide a framework to ensure suitable assistance was available across Australia.

In his project 'Graduating from the child welfare system: a critical examination of support services for young people leaving state care', Dr Mendes is investigating and comparing the levels of such support in both Victoria and New South Wales.

In the mid-1990s, both major political parties in Victoria pledged to provide special programs, but NSW remains the only state in Australia to have passed legislation and implemented programs to assist young people when they leave care.

Dr Mendes' 12-month project, which commenced earlier this year, was funded by an \$11,000 grant from Monash's Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences. It aims to document relevant legislation and support programs for care leavers, clarify their needs and identify the role of various groups in helping or hindering policies.

"NSW is clearly well ahead in helping care leavers," Dr Mendes said. "While there is an enormous amount of concern, enthusiasm and energy for such programs among non-government groups in Victoria, there is little government support."

Children who have suffered severe physical or sexual abuse or neglect within the family home are placed in state care. When care orders cease, funding for carers generally stops.

Nearly 400 young people, aged 14 to 18, leave the care system in Victoria every year. Many of them end up homeless.

Dr Mendes said he believed all young people in care should remain there until they are at least 18 and should receive support until they are 21, as is the case in NSW.

"In Victoria, the state is essentially saying that it can do a better job than some parents in looking after young people, but then when the child is 16, 17 or 18, they are out the door and receive no further help," he said.

"This is when they are forming relationships and completing their final years of study, so it is a crucial time for young people to have continuing support."

Dr Mendes said research showed the programs had helped facilitate better outcomes for young people by providing housing and financial support.

— Diane Squires

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# The voices of poverty

## HISTORY

Older people in Australia's most impoverished regions have told Monash University historian Dr Mark Peel they fear the country is slipping back into a depression like that experienced during the 1930s.

Dr Peel, senior lecturer in the School of History, spoke to as many as 400 people in three of Australia's most disadvantaged areas – Broadmeadows in Victoria, Inala in Queensland and Mount Druitt in New South Wales – about their experiences of living in poverty.

His findings have been documented in the book *The Lowest Rung: Voices of Australian Poverty*, published this month by Cambridge University Press.

Dr Peel said many of those he interviewed felt the insecurity and poverty they experienced as children was on the way back.

"Their children and grandchildren are looking into the future and not seeing jobs," he said. "Men are being made redundant at 40 and not finding new employment."

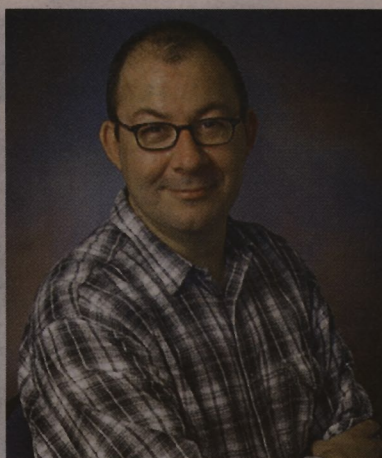
But he said it was society's perceived acceptance of poverty that gave people most cause for concern.

"According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1.8 million people do not have enough work – that means almost one-fifth of adult Australians want more."

"We are not talking about people wanting to buy luxuries; we are talking about people trying to afford necessities. And yet unemployment and poverty is being talked about as though that's just the way it is and we should accept it."



Seeing the future in the past: Dr Mark Peel has found fears of a new depression.



File photo: Newsplix

Dr Peel says poverty is about the kind of lives people are forced to live because of a lack of income – the aspirations they are forced to forego and the insecurities they face.

"Most people know that feeling of spending too much in December and being anxious in January, or that one time a year when you put off paying the gas bill so you don't blow out your overdraft."

"Imagine living with that every day and at a more basic level – thinking 'do I buy potatoes to fill my kids up or do I pay the gas bill? Do I heat the house

every second night so I can afford the electricity?'"

Dr Peel said he believed the community at large could learn from the experiences and build on the ideas of many of those he interviewed.

"Too often those who write policy on this issue believe the poor have no valuable opinions and nothing to offer on this subject. But the people I met had wonderful ideas about work-for-the-dole schemes that would provide people with training but would not be punitive or pretend that unemployment was somehow their fault."

"Important conversations about change and how to cope with it are taking place among residents in poor areas, yet national conversations about the same issues never include them."

Dr Peel said that after speaking to so many people, he came to the realisation that there was often little distance between success and failure.

"Very few people are invulnerable. These are people who have often just had bad luck – they have been involved in car crashes, bad marriages, workplace accidents or have lost their jobs and been unable to get new ones."

He believes these are things that could happen to anyone and we need to build a society that protects people from plunging into poverty "when and if they are unlucky, or weak, or incapacitated".

"We are all vulnerable, and one of the kindest things we can do is to protect each other from the consequences of inequality and poverty. If we choose to do nothing, our children and grandchildren will have to live with that decision."

– Diane Squires

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## Photographic memories win national prize

### FINE ARTS

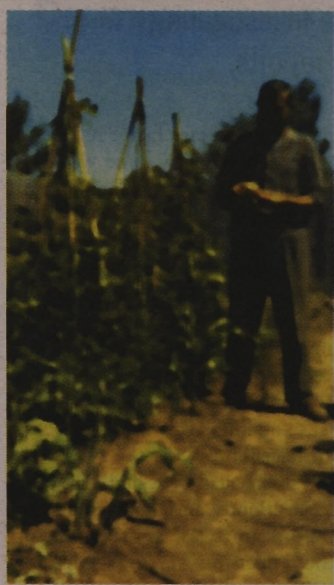
Monash fine arts student Mr Domenico Cozzolino was presented with the national Biennial Leica/CCP Documentary Photography Award for 2003/2004 at the Centre for Contemporary Photography in Melbourne recently.

The judges for Australia's most prestigious survey of contemporary documentary photography singled out his series, *Arcadia Del Sud: West Heidelberg, Melbourne, Australia, Circa 1966*, saying it showed how documentary photography could be used to combine the historical with the personal.

The series is a digital reworking of shots taken by Mr Cozzolino as a teenager, which show his parents as first-generation migrants. "As my parents get older, this series is a way for me to remember and honour them," he said.

Mr Cozzolino, who has pursued a career in design over the past 20 years, is currently studying for a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in the Faculty of Art and Design at Monash.

His winning series of photos will tour to Sydney, regional Victoria and New South Wales next year.



Domenico Cozzolino's reflections on his award-winning photographs:

"By throwing the shots even more out of focus than they were I found a way of unifying them ... I am also very interested in exploring the concept of memory and how photography affects memory."

"Nostalgia to me is a longing for the 'good old days'. The intensely personal memories that these images evoke for me are mainly negative – often sad, occasionally happy. But I would never want to go back there."

"I personally find the images strangely 'silent' and eerie. It's like I'm looking at a TV set through a sound-proofed window ... I know there is noise on the other side of the window but from where I am watching, it is deafeningly quiet."

Comments courtesy of the Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne.  
www.ccp.org.au/



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