

MONASH UNIVERSITY NEWS

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Crazy ants threaten isle

By DAVID BRUCE

The native wildlife of Christmas Island in the Indian Ocean, in particular its world-renowned red land crab, is being threatened by an invader.

The exotic invasive ant, *Anoploepis gracilipes*, or crazy ant, inadvertently introduced to Christmas Island some time between 1915 and 1934, is now spreading throughout the undisturbed national rainforest that covers three-quarters of the island, killing crabs in their millions, threatening the rich animal and bird life, and fundamentally altering the nature of the rainforest.

For more than 10 years, Monash University scientists Dr Dennis O'Dowd, Dr Peter Green and Professor Sam Lake have studied, and admired, the unique ecosystem that defines Christmas Island as one of the last relatively intact oceanic islands. But over the past 18 months, they have seen their idyllic laboratory under sustained attack by a destructive invader.

"This could be catastrophic. I can think of no impact as large as this by a single invader in such a short period of time," said Dr O'Dowd, director of Monash's newly established Centre for the Analysis and Management of Biological Invasions.

The overall extent of the ant infestation is still unclear, but limited surveys by the research team estimate that up to 3 per cent of the island rainforest has been affected in about a dozen separate forest pockets. They believe the ants have killed upwards of 2.5 million red crabs. And it seems the ant infestations are growing at a rapid rate and with no natural barriers to their expansion.

"This is a horrific invader and this problem has to be taken seriously. Overall, we just don't know how bad it is. But we can say that in areas of crazy ant infestation, the red crab has been eliminated. In other words, a key driver of the island's ecosystem is being knocked out," Dr O'Dowd said.

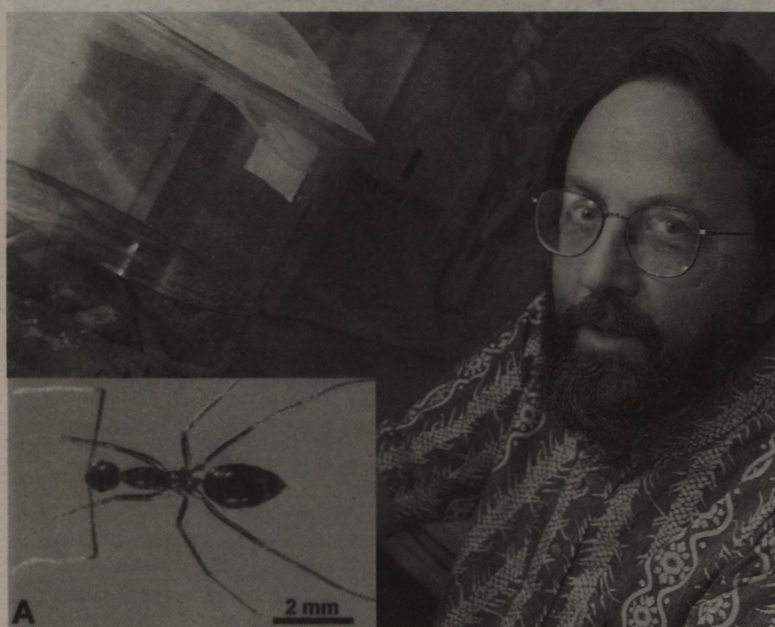
In 1997, Professor Lake was working on the island's southern shoreline, when he made an observation that completely altered the focus of the team's research. "We noticed that when we kicked some of the burrows to check the crabs, crazy ants came swarming out instead. When we dug up some of these burrows, we were saddened to see they had dead crabs in them," Professor Lake said.

"Later, we noticed that the ants had established themselves on parts of the shore terrace, where they were intercepting and killing thousands of migrating crabs that had come down-slope to breed. That was the moment we realised we had a real problem."

Until now, Christmas Island could boast an extraordinarily well-preserved ecosystem. Isolated from Australia's north-west coast by 1400 km and the Indonesian island of Java to its north by 360 km, the island, at a mere 130 square km, is an oft-forgotten part of Australia. And despite more than a century of human settlement on the island, intact rainforest is still remarkably free of exotic species.

The island has become well known around the world for its abundant wildlife and spectacular annual migration of red land crabs. For millennia, the crabs have dominated the rainforest floor, occurring at extraordinary densities (one crab per square metre) and actively shaping and preserving the island ecosystem. In the past, the crabs have formed a formidable barrier to many

"It's like walking into the killing fields. Dead and dying crabs litter the forest floor. In uninvaded sites, the familiar sounds of scuttling crabs permeate the forest; in crazy ant-infested forest, this is replaced with the drone of carrion-feeding flies. We were used to a pleasant, benign forest and then we walked into this scene of death," said Dr O'Dowd.



Monash researcher Dr Dennis O'Dowd and one of the crazy ants (inset) threatening the isolated ecosystem of Christmas Island. Photo by Shannon Mattinson.

would-be invaders that have disembarked from visiting ships.

But now, too small to be eaten by the crabs, the crazy ant invaders swarm over the adult crabs and kill them. Exactly how they do this is unclear, although the scientists observed a slow death, from 24 to 36 hours, involving some sort of paralysis. Typically, Dr O'Dowd said, the ants invade crab burrows, kill the crabs and eat them. Adding insult to injury, the crazy ants then use the crab burrows as convenient nests.

But the impact of the crazy ant invasion goes beyond the red crabs. While the red crab has found an enemy in the crazy ant, the scale insects that feed on the tall rainforest trees have found a friend. The ants and the scale insects have established a mutually beneficial association. The honeydew produced by the scale insects is eaten by the ants, which return the favour by protecting the scale insects against natural predators such as wasps, spiders and parasites. Under the

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Delegation makes US nuke visit

By JOSIE GIBSON

A Monash-led delegation has visited Washington and New York as part of continuing talks on security and disarmament in the Asia-Pacific region.

Last month's visit by 25 Asia-Pacific specialists was organised by Monash's National Centre for South Asian Studies (NCSAS) and the Monash Asia Institute.

The two-day dialogue in Washington and the half-day seminar in New York were the second phase of a process initiated by Monash in August last year in the aftermath of nuclear tests by India and Pakistan. The nuclear tests had raised fears that the escalating tensions could lead to nuclear conflict.

The hosts for the US visit were Georgetown University and the Asia Society in New York. In Georgetown, President Bill Clinton's special envoy on nuclear non-proliferation, Professor Robert Gallucci, chaired a major part of the dialogue.

According to NCSAS director Associate Professor Marika Vicziany, Professor Gallucci's participation was very important.

"The focus of discussion was the controversial issue of minimum credible nuclear deterrence," Dr Vicziany said. "America and India have had prolonged discussions about the meaning of this phrase for the last six months. They have argued about how to measure this kind of deterrence."

Dr Vicziany said Washington delegates felt arguments about definitions and measurements were less important than using "credible minimum nuclear

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Students pass on the safe-drinking message



Hear what I'm saying? Tanya Hanby and John Britton push the responsible drinking message in a special Student Theatre production during Monash Orientation 1999 at Clayton campus. For more on Orientation, turn to page 8. Photo by Rhonda Joyce.

Making multimedia easy

By DEREK BROWN

Monash University academics have created a template that takes the mystery and hard work out of producing multimedia.

Dr Barry Richardson and Mr Andrew Brown from the Department of Psychology in Gippsland have produced the template to encourage academics to create their own multimedia presentations, such as CD-ROMS or websites.

According to Mr Brown, who is a multimedia officer in the

department, it's simply a matter of academics filling in the blanks with the information they want. "It's very flexible, and is designed to be as easy to use as a word processor," he said.

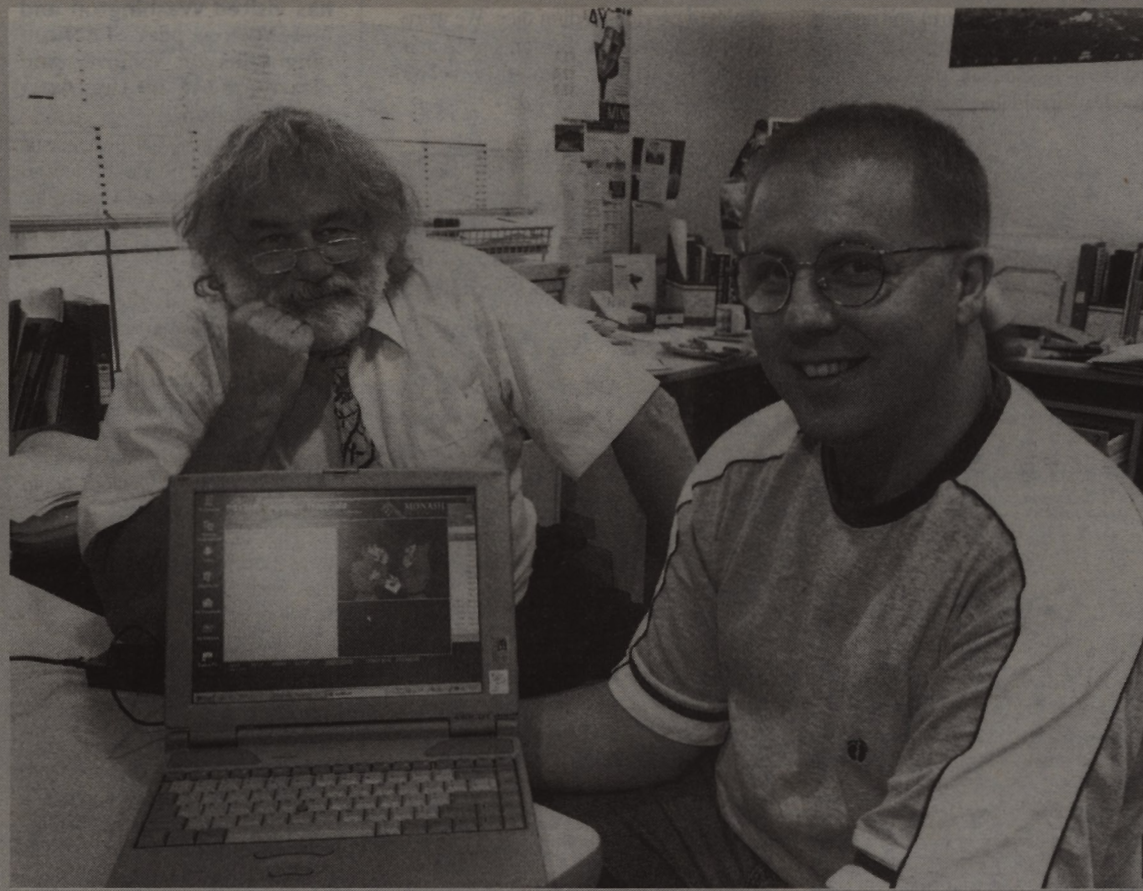
The template prompts the designer to choose the number of sections for the presentation, label them and fill in the fields with text. Images can then be added by dragging them into the spaces provided.

A practical exercise, for example a laboratory session examining a brain, can be filmed and loaded on to a CD-ROM or website along with additional information and graphics.

And while Dr Richardson, who is director of the department, says the template was primarily designed to suit science-based courses, the program can be used just as effectively for the humanities.

"Where a science lab may have a results section, a presentation from the English department may offer a conclusion - the differences are minimal."

For more information on the multimedia template, contact Dr Richardson on (03) 9902 6342 or Mr Brown on (03) 9902 6843.



It's as easy as ABC: Dr Barry Richardson, left, and Mr Andrew Brown are hoping their template will encourage academics to use multimedia technology. Photo by Shannon Mattinson.

Crazy ants threaten isle

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guardianship of the crazy ant, the scale insects thrive so well that they can even kill rainforest canopy trees.

The Christmas Island rainforest has a unique structural feature - a remarkably open understorey, caused in part by the dense canopy above and in part by the intense ground foraging of the red crab.

"The natural state of the island's forest is a low diversity, open understorey," Dr O'Dowd said. "This is what makes Christmas Island what it

is. When you remove the red crabs, a diversity of seedlings carpets the forest floor and a thick layer of leaf litter accumulates. This may completely change the forest ecosystem from an open understorey to a dense, almost impenetrable, thicket and alter the release of nutrients into the soil."

The researchers have just delivered a detailed report to Environment Australia, part of the Commonwealth Department of Environment and Heritage. In it, they call for a comprehensive survey of the ant infestation on Christmas Island, an analysis of the potential impact on all species, and the immediate commencement of a control program.

In addressing the recommendations, Environment Australia is currently developing an action plan to tackle the ant invasion.

"This is not going to be an easy problem to solve," said Dr Green, now a research fellow at the Australian National University. "Dramatic successes where people have eradicated invasive ants from islands are few. But, at the same time, it may be feasible to reduce the density and contain them to the areas of current infestation."

"Hopefully, we are onto the problem early enough to make a difference. We'd all hate to see Christmas Island go the way of so many other oceanic islands."

Global role for Monash biological invasions centre

The Centre for the Analysis and Management of Biological Invasions has been established at Monash to help coordinate study of the ecological and economic impact of biological invasions and address policy issues on the movement of species around the globe.

"This is an era of global homogenisation," said Dr Dennis O'Dowd, the director of the centre. "Globalisation is usually viewed in the context of economics

and information technology, but its biological implications are enormous and poorly explored. Biological invasions have become one the major issues of human-induced global change.

"With the increasing flow of human commerce and trade, barriers to dispersal of organisms are increasingly broken down and the rate of introduction of alien species, both purposeful accidental, accelerates."

The creation of the centre, Dr O'Dowd says, will help bring

an integrated approach to research and management of these invasions, incorporating ecological, economic and social perspectives.

"The invasion of Christmas Island by the crazy ant is a microcosm that vividly illustrates the impact and problems that invasive species cause around the globe," he said. "This is an ever-increasing problem and one of the major national and international issues that must be tackled in the next century."

BRIEFS

New group for global activities

The overall direction of Monash University's international activities will be coordinated by a new entity called Monash Global.

According to Monash vice-chancellor Professor David Robinson, Monash Global will ensure that the university's international strategy is fully integrated into overall Monash planning.

"The Monash Plan made it clear that our international activities are an essential part of our core activities, and the failure to adequately resource and support this task will seriously undermine the broader teaching, learning and research activities we undertake both in Australia and overseas," Professor Robinson said.

Monash Global's activities will be managed by a board, with day-to-day activities being the responsibility of Monash deputy vice-chancellor Professor John Maloney and the university's executive director, International Affairs, Mr Ian Porter.

Monash International will continue to operate as a service organisation under Monash Global's direction.

Young guitarists to strum their stuff

Young guitar enthusiasts will head to Monash University's Peninsula

campus this month to compete in the Young Guitarist of the Year Award.

Sponsored by Monash's Peninsula campus and the student group MONSU, the competition is the fore-runner to the Frankston Guitar Festival, which is held from 26 to 28 March in and around the Frankston Cultural Centre.

Competition entrants must be aged 21 years or younger and are expected to be above basic learning standard.

Auditions will be held at the George Jenkins Theatre on 15 March, with the winner announced on 27 March at the festival's Guitar Greats Concert.

Monash-designed flu drug gets go-ahead

A flu drug designed and synthesised by a Monash University team has been given the go-ahead for marketing to the general public.

The Australian Drug Evaluation Committee last month recommended that Relenza be approved for marketing for the treatment of influenza A and B.

Designed and synthesised by Professor Mark von Itzstein and his team at Monash's Victorian College of Pharmacy in collaboration with CSIRO's Division of Biomolecular Engineering, Relenza is the result of almost 20 years' research and development.

Delegation makes US nuke visit

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deterrence" as a policy framework and a general approach. The alternative was to risk a nuclear escalation in the region.

She said delegates agreed on several major issues ranging from concerns about economic sanctions to the need for confidence-building measures and ways to boost economic links.

"The distinctive aspect of the Washington dialogue was that it brought together policy-makers, influential academics and representatives from think-tanks in several

Asian countries and the US," she said. "The dialogue in Melbourne last August had focused on talks between Australian and South Asian representatives."

In broadening the dialogue to include delegates from China, Russia, Korea, Japan, Singapore and the US, Dr Vicziany said, a range of other regional questions could be addressed, such as the emerging role of China in Asia.

"The real achievement of this forum was establishing Monash as a credible player in the eyes of America, a source of experts with their fingers on the pulse of the region," Dr Vicziany said. "After all, the Asia-Pacific is our backyard."

Prescription forgery a bitter pill

By JOSIE GIBSON

A project studying the extent of prescription forgery and fraud in Victoria could lead to changes in the way prescriptions are handled by doctors and pharmacists.

The first of its kind in Australia, the study will help devise strategies to reduce the level of theft and misuse of script pads, according to project leader Mr Michael Scavone, of the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia based at Monash University's Victorian Pharmacy College.

"There have been few studies of this type, either in Australia or overseas," Mr Scavone said. "It's a difficult project because detecting forgeries is complicated. Obviously, forgers don't want to be caught."

The 12-month project has been funded by a \$100,900 grant from the Victorian Law Enforcement Drug Fund.

It involves reviewing data held by the Department of Human Services and Victoria Police, surveying doctors and pharmacists, and auditing prescriptions to identify forgeries. Researchers will examine issues such as doctors' storage of script pads and review strategies used overseas for dealing with the problem.

Victoria has about 1200 pharmacies which dispense an estimated 43 million prescriptions each year. In 1996-97, the Victoria Police database recorded about 400 offences relating to forgeries or fraudulently altered prescriptions.

The Health Insurance Commission provides prescription pads free to medical practitioners. The pads are not identified by numbering or colouring and their use is not regulated.

Mr Scavone said the extent of the problem was unknown but anecdotal evidence suggested that forgery was widespread.

"It's a problem for pharmacists as well as doctors," he said. "When people come in with prescriptions, pharmacists have little to go by if they don't know the doctors' handwriting. It's difficult to say, 'Yes, this is a forgery' or 'This isn't'."

Several types of people were involved in prescription forgery and fraud, Mr Scavone said, ranging from drug addicts and those trafficking in drugs or scripts to people who were medically dependent on drugs.

According to Mr Scavone, the study is just the first phase of a long-term project. "The problem will not be sorted out in 12 months," he said. "However, establishing the extent of the problem will be the first step towards solving it."

Corruption and crime threats for Taiwanese

BY JOSIE GIBSON

Organised crime and corruption – the 'black and gold' – are still the main internal threats facing Taiwan as it prepares to enter the new millennium, according to a Monash-based Taiwan specialist.

But according to Professor Bruce Jacobs, director of the Centre of East Asian Studies and its Taiwan Research Unit, while they had resulted in some 'spectacular' political murders, the twin elements have not seriously threatened the island's democratic process.

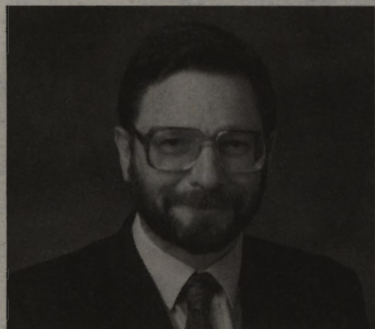
"These problems – quite familiar in many developing democracies – will not be solved easily, but I believe the vast majority of Taiwan's citizens truly value their freedom and input into the political system," Professor Jacobs said.

Taiwan faces the 21st century' was the topic of a conference Professor Jacobs organised last month which brought together speakers from Taiwan and several Australian universities. Scholars and bureaucrats discussed topics ranging from relations with China to democratisation and educational reform.

The main external issue facing Taiwan – relations across the Taiwan Strait – was unlikely to be resolved any time soon, Professor Jacobs predicted.

"The real issues are in China itself, between the hard-liners and moderates," he said. "China's decision-making on Taiwan is effectively paralysed."

Talks between Beijing and Taipei broke off in 1995 when Taiwan's President Lee Teng-hui made a 'private' visit to the US. Like many nations, Washington has diplomatic relations with China but maintains unofficial links with Taiwan. China continues to insist that Taiwan is part of 'one China' and should not be treated as a separate diplomatic entity.



Professor Bruce Jacobs.

Cross-strait talks resumed recently, but Professor Jacobs said Taipei had made it clear that it would not allow Beijing to control Taiwan or endanger its democratisation, economic prosperity or social systems. Relations were "in a state of flux".

Despite the constant external threat from China, Taiwan has been able to maintain economic prosperity while building a vibrant democracy, a rarity in Asia. This underlying prosperity has enabled it to weather the worst effects of the Asian financial crisis.

Professor Jacobs said that while the story of Taiwan's 'economic miracle' was relatively well known, its transformation from an authoritarian state to a democracy was less understood and perhaps even more dramatic.

"Neither of these things happened overnight but rather they resulted from series of steps taken over many years," he said.

Many factors had contributed to Taiwan's strength as an economy and as a democracy, he added. "There has generally been a clear national consensus about goals. And Taiwan has been blessed with a large number of very capable and public-spirited leaders in both government and opposition."

Copies of Professor Jacobs' paper, 'Democratisation in Taiwan', are available from the Monash Asia Institute on (03) 9905 5280.

Study to map car distribution

BY JOOSIE GIBSON

Marketing experts from Monash University are involved in the first stage of an Australia-wide research program to map motor vehicle distribution.

The first phase of the project has attracted \$100,000 in funding from industry, with the amount set to double in 2000.

The research is being carried out under the auspices of the International Car Distribution Programme Australia (ICDPA), which was set up last year to conduct research in the local market.

The distribution system – supplying cars to dealers, selling, servicing and re-marketing them – is vital to the car industry, yet research until recently has focused more on the stages from design through to manufacture.

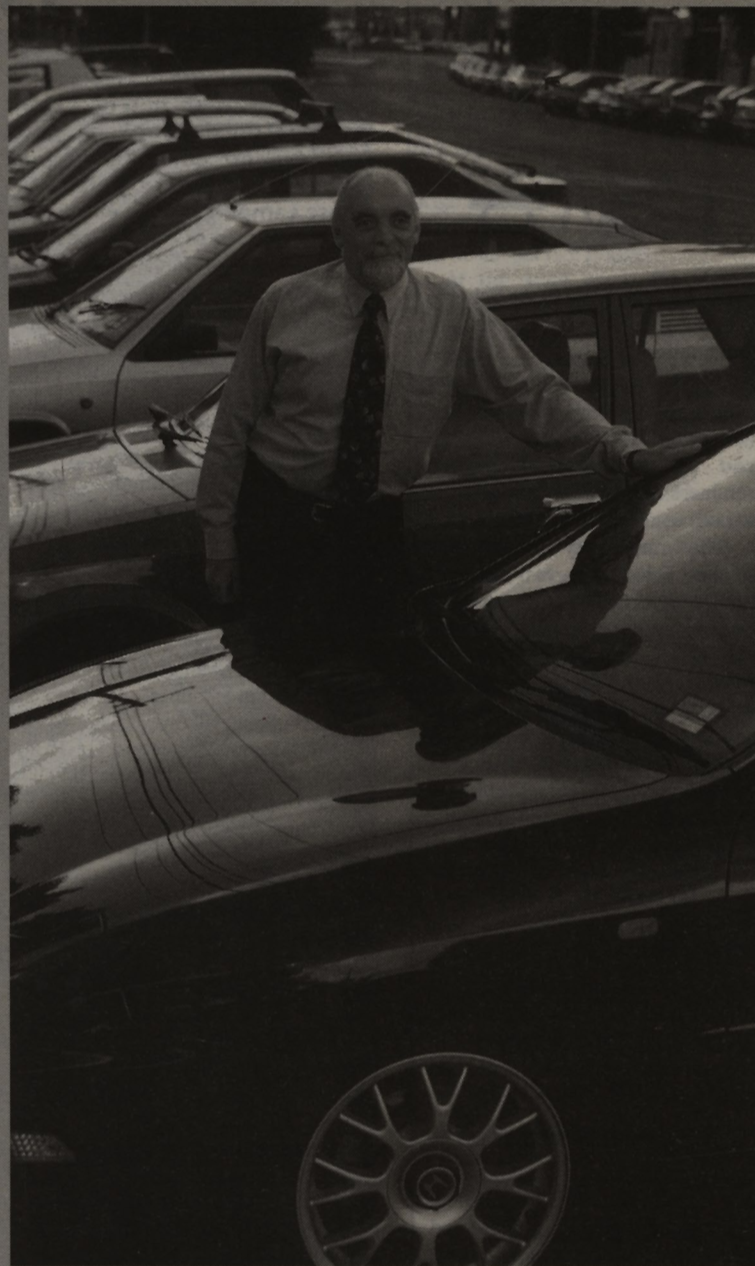
"Australians bought cars in record numbers in 1998, and news of mergers and takeovers and industry cooperation continues to make headlines," according to Mr Peter Dapiran, coordinator of graduate logistics programs in the Marketing department at Caulfield campus.

"Our research program will fill a major gap in business research."

Mr Dapiran and his team members, marketing lecturers Ms Susan Freeman and Ms Linda Brennan, will each work on different aspects of the project.

Mr Dapiran will carry out a study of new vehicle dealer best practice, aimed at comparing the operations and performances of Australian new vehicle dealers with those in other countries. Ms Brennan will oversee research into the used vehicle market, while Ms Freeman will be responsible for the new vehicle supply and stocking segment.

"One of the reasons for starting ICDP in Australia was that vehicle distribution did not have the same basis of authoritative, internationally comparative data as manufacturing, and we need to determine what are best practices," Mr Dapiran said.



Leading-edge research by Mr Peter Dapiran and his team at Monash University could help Australia's car industry to cut costs, with benefits for consumers. Photo by Andrew Barcham.

The researchers will use a combination of surveys and case studies to elicit information that can be compared with data from European, British and American markets. ICDP research in the UK has reportedly led to major

changes in the way cars are produced and sold there.

"The aim of this type of research is to ultimately help to reduce costs to the industry and therefore to consumers," Mr Dapiran said.

US official to be keynote guest at Gippsland forum

The American Under-secretary for Agriculture and Rural Development, Dr Jill Long Thompson, will be the keynote speaker at a technology conference in Gippsland later this month.

'Uniting our Rural Communities – the Technology and Leadership Project', organised by Uniting our Rural Communities Inc (UoRC) and Monash University, will be held at the university's Gippsland campus on 30 March.

Dr Long Thompson has been a lifelong advocate of the development and advancement of rural America and of the welfare of rural families, with broad experience in Congress. Outside politics, she has been a college business professor and co-manager of her family's farm.

Topics at the Gippsland conference will include the social impact of the technology age, women's role in regional development and globalisation, and the rise of small cooperatives.

The conference is part of the pilot Technology and Leadership Project aimed at offering training in and raising awareness of information and communication technologies in the region. The project has been funded by Networking the Nation, the Federal Government's regional telecommunications infrastructure fund.

Earlier this year UoRC, with support from the fund and Monash, held a series of free public planning workshops across Gippsland aimed at gathering input to help shape the project's direction over the next 18 months.

The workshops were designed to gauge the level of awareness of the Internet among rural businesses, community groups and home users.

For more information on the conference or the Technology and Community Leadership Project, contact the Monash Centre for Electronic Commerce on (03) 5122 6508.

Website fills info void for students

BY ADAM MULLER

Three Melbourne students have pooled their resources and entrepreneurial skills to develop a new website aimed at senior secondary and tertiary students.

Launched this month, Uniworx is the brainchild of Daniel Rechnitzer and Ken Gough, marketing graduates from Swinburne University, and Scott Julian, an information technology specialist who studies at Monash University.

Monash is the principal sponsor of Uniworx, which has been developed as a one-stop shop for tertiary and VCE students.

"The initial support from Monash really helped to get Uniworx off the ground and attract further support from the education and business sectors," Daniel said.

The three say the concept emerged from conversations among friends lamenting the lack of a single source of relevant and easily accessible information for students.

According to Daniel, the most common response to the Uniworx idea has been: "Why hasn't this been done before?"

"We were acutely aware of the lack of an all-embracing resource," he explained. "Student noticeboards

within institutions are limited in their scope and disorganised in their content."

Ken said Uniworx had been designed as "a dynamic and evolutionary resource, driven by imagination and pragmatism to save time, effort and energy".

"By creating a global student village," added Scott, "we were out to bring a sense of community and idealism back to the education process

so one institution is not pitted against another but rather alongside, working together to benefit students."

According to the manager of Monash's Prospective Students Office, Ms Caroline Knowles, the step from secondary school to uni is a large one, so a website that can smooth the transition by providing a comprehensive source of relevant information to students is a valuable tool.



Keeping in touch: Two of the faces behind Uniworx, Daniel Rechnitzer, left, and Ken Gough, were out and about during Orientation activities at Monash recently.

Schools



Welcome to our first Schools column, a run-down of news and information about Monash University especially for staff and senior students at Victorian secondary schools. Our aim is to keep you up to date with events, seminars and sessions of interest to both teachers and students.

The university's extensive schools liaison program offers a variety of activities and services, ranging from complex transition research and teachers' seminars and events to course information sessions for prospective students and programs aimed at easing the transition to university.

We hope to keep you informed about many of these activities throughout 1999.

Brochures out

A brochure outlining services available for secondary schools has been sent to principals, careers coordinators and VCE coordinators at all Victorian schools. The brochure also includes details and dates of major events for 1999.

'Explorers' wanted

'Explore Monash' sessions are being conducted during the school holidays to give regional and interstate students and their families the opportunity to speak to staff and students about their options at Monash.

The sessions, which include extensive tours of faculties, student residences and facilities, will be held at the Gippsland campus on 8 April and the Clayton campus (with an optional visit to another campus) on 9 April. Both programs commence at 10.30 am.

Seminars planned

The 'At Monash' seminar series consists of five course and careers information sessions for Year 11 and 12 students. The sessions provide information based on broad discipline areas.

Science, Pharmacy and Medicine seminars will be held on 26 April, and Business and Economics, Information Technology and Engineering will be held on 28 April. All seminars run from 1 pm to 3 pm.

1999 successes

About 6700 offers for Monash courses were made to students during the first round of VTAC offers. Science, Education, Engineering and Information Technology courses have all experienced an increase in demand, with other disciplines relatively stable.

So far, scholarships valued at up to \$6000 a year each have been offered to 208 commencing students. These include 85 Awards for Excellence, 70 Deans Scholars Awards and 53 Merit and Equity scholarships.

More than 600 senior secondary students have been accepted into the Enhancement Studies program and have commenced classes.

For more information, contact the Prospective Students Office on (03) 99054164.

Finding a point in (Dream) time

By PETER GOLDIE

Deep in the mists of time, a spirit world struggle between good and evil forced an Aboriginal tribe called the Djungan to cease camping on the vast table-top mountain of their ancestors.

Ngarabullgan, about 100 kilometres north-west of Cairns, is at the heart of the Djungan's Dreaming. The mesa - 18 kilometres long by six wide, with 200 to 400-metre high cliffs - is owned by the Djungan, but they will not forage there or stay on the mountain overnight. They are even averse to travelling through the area.

The Djungan have lived continuously in the area for 35,000 years, but today avoid the largest natural geological feature in their area because they believe it to be the home of Eekoo, a dangerous evil spirit.

It is unlikely an exact reason why the Djungan stopped camping on Ngarabullgan will ever be known.

But Monash academic Dr Bruno David, who is a Logan Research Fellow in the Department of Geography and Environmental Science, believes that with detailed research of the archaeological sites, he can pinpoint the time when camping ceased to take place on the mountain, and in doing so reveal something more.

"The implication is that this may be the onset of the Djungan belief in Eekoo," said Dr David, who has excavated 16 caves and other sites on the mountain and a further eight in the surrounding region.

"The cessation of camp use on the mountain-top was systematic. We have no idea why this suddenly happened ... it did not occur in surrounding areas. All we know is that about 650 years ago there was a change in the way people interacted with the mountain.

"The dating of this event, taken with the Dreamtime stories of the present-day elders, leads me to ask whether the Dreamtime histories



Researcher Dr Bruno David (below) and the haunting beauty of the Ngarabullgan region (above).



we hear about may be more dynamic than usually assumed."

According to Dr David, the research not only illuminates a watershed in the Djungan's cultural history and its relationship with the natural environment, but also demystifies

'In the Dreaming, the spirit thief, Eekoo, steals and eats the swamp hen's eggs. For his bad deed he was pursued by the creatures of the land - the kangaroos and wallaby, the birds - who burnt the mountain-top (then a huge pile of rocks) to entrap him. The flames of the Dreaming Spirits' fire swept up the mountain, melting the rocks into high cliffs, giving them their present shape. But Eekoo escaped the flames by creating a lake on the plateau, under which he hid and still survives now.'

some aspects of the Dreamtime which have taken hold in popular perceptions.

He believes the work challenges the perceived timelessness of Dreaming, an aspect of Aboriginal culture that has flavoured white impressions of Aboriginal history.

"There is the impression that, like Deamtime stories, Aboriginal societies have been timeless, static and unchanging," he told *Monash News*, "but like all peoples all over the world, Aboriginal society has always been changing."

New chancellor takes up position at Monash

Nine new faces from a broad cross section of the community have joined Monash's peak decision-making body to help guide the university into the new millennium.

The first meeting for 1999 of the University Council recently welcomed the new chancellor and eight new Council members.

The chairman of BHP, Mr Jerry Ellis, presided over his first official function as chancellor following the retirement of Mr Bill Rogers.

After formally introducing the new members, Mr Ellis noted that Monash had grown and improved under the leadership of Mr Rogers. He said he was proud to be chancellor of a university with such a diverse and respected profile and he urged the new Council members to focus on the key issues facing the university.

The new Council members are:

- Ms Louise Adler - presents the Arts Today program on Radio National and is a former arts editor of *The Age*. She is a past publishing director of Reed Books Australia and a former English tutor at the University of Melbourne.
- Mr John Laurie - chairman of Melbourne City Link Authority and a former director of PowerNet Victoria and the Australian Road Research Board. He has been involved in many large construction projects over the past 40 years.

- Ms Ann Sherry - head, Group Human Resources Westpac. She is a leading figure in human resources and industrial relations and was first assistant secretary in the Office of the Status of Women under former prime minister Mr Paul Keating.

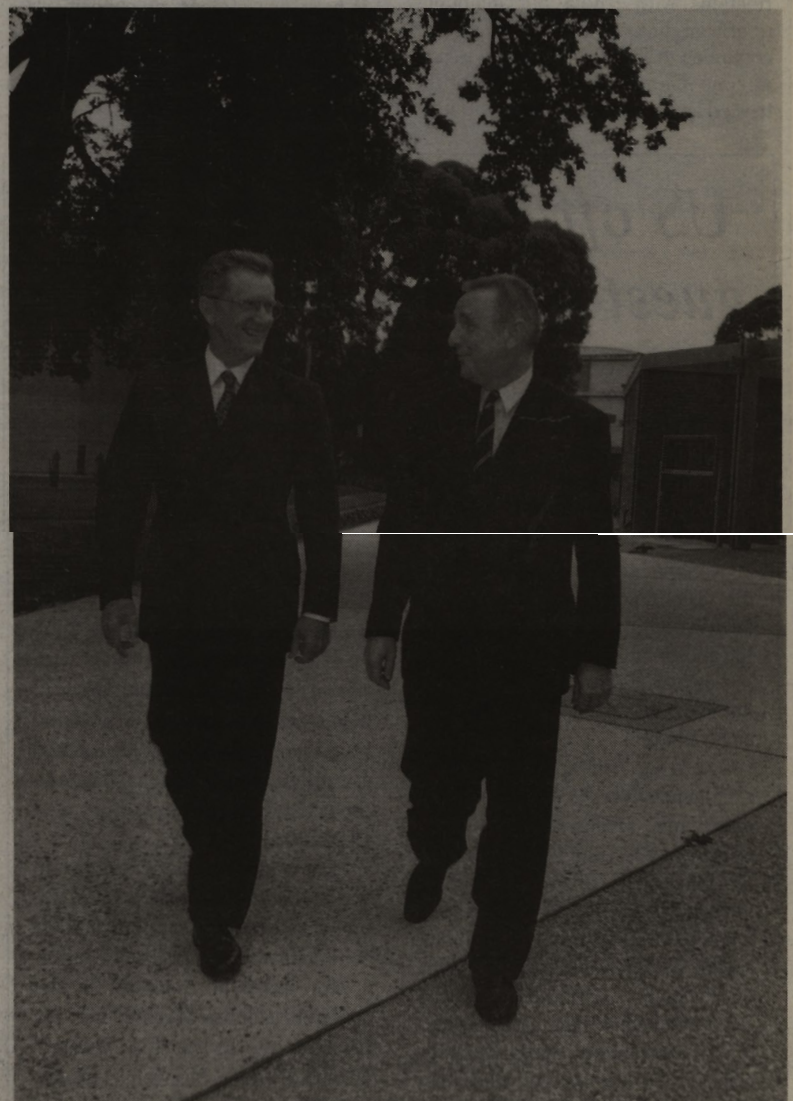
- Ms Wendy Peter - a partner in Arthur Robinson & Hedderwicks where she practises in competition and commercial law. She is a graduate of Monash and Cambridge.

- Dr Mark Schrapper - currently runs his own mining consultancy after many years in senior management at CTA. He is also chairman of Montech and is a past member of the Australian Research Council.

- Dr Paul Rodan - has been registrar in Monash's Science faculty since 1991. He has previously served on the councils of both Chisholm Institute and Monash University and is a graduate of Monash.

- Associate Professor Andrew Markus - a long-time member and former head of the History department at Monash, he has teaching and research expertise in Australian Aboriginal history and immigration issues.

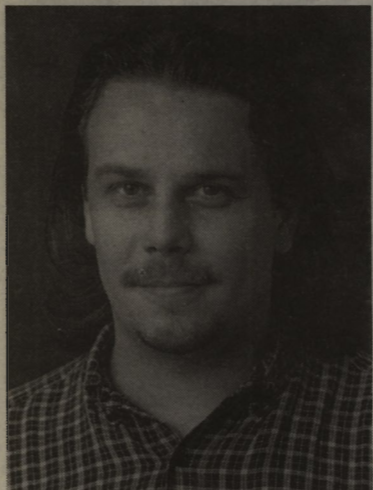
- Mr Darriel Jeffree - a PhD student with the Centre for Drama and Theatre Studies. He is also president of the Monash Postgraduate Association.



In step: Monash University's new chancellor, Mr Jerry Ellis, left, with vice-chancellor Professor David Robinson. Photo by Rhonda Joyce.

Funding hospital services – back to basics

The funding of hospital services is a perennial topic of public debate, and one of the most politically charged. Stuart Peacock, from Monash University's Health Economics Unit, argues that it's time for policymakers to get back to basics.



OPINION

Hospitals represent the symbolic façade of health services to many people, and account for a significant proportion of total health service spending. It is not surprising, then, that hospital funding policy has become a politically charged issue in many countries.

However, while the public and political debates continue, it is important to return to some basic principles of public sector health service funding which apply in many countries:

- health service funding mechanisms should reflect the objectives of the health system, which should in turn reflect society's objectives;
- efficiency and equity should be central considerations, with a strong emphasis on population health and health outcomes;
- incentives arising from funding mechanisms should promote the achievement of the objectives of the health system;
- mechanisms should be based on scientific evidence, and the role of judgement should be explicit.

The first of these principles is one which few countries have begun to address in a systematic manner. The idea is that society pays for public health services through taxation, and health services are provided to best meet society's health care needs.

To do this we must first examine societies' values and objectives to determine what 'best' means to different people. To many, the aims of the health system may seem obvious: to maximise health and cure ill health. But research indicates that there are a range of possible objectives relating to health, economics and social justice.

The lack of understanding about societies' values and objectives has led to the de facto development of objectives by health system bureaucrats and service providers which are believed to be related to societal goals. But, the extent to which bureaucratically and politically determined goals are relevant to society is open to debate.

The two prime considerations of most health systems are efficiency and equity.

Efficiency does not, as many perceive it, mean cost cutting. Instead, health systems generally seek to address operational and allocative



efficiency. Operational efficiency refers to producing a given range of health services with the least resources possible. Allocative efficiency relates to maximising the wellbeing of the population from those health services.

Efficiency is based in the notion that resources are allocated so that the health of the population is maximised given the resources available.

Equity is more difficult to define, but most countries have adopted a goal of equal access for equal need. In other words, individuals or populations with similar health care needs should have the same opportunities to use health services.

The funding system for hospital services in Australia is complex and loosely organised. This is highlighted by the mixed response at federal and state levels in the design of funding systems based on the pursuit of efficiency and equity goals.

At the federal level, the health care agreements between federal and state/territory governments have paid only limited attention to these objectives. Debate has instead tended to focus on the size of the relative contribution of the different levels of government to the hospital sector.

Estimates of future funding in the agreements are based on a combination of past levels of use, the population and

its age and gender composition, and political negotiation. Funding health services on the basis of past use has long been recognised as a source of significant inequities and inefficiencies. Areas with historically high levels of use are rewarded with increased levels of funding, often without proper scrutiny.

The interrelationship between health service use, needs and availability is highly complex, but sound methods to untangle the relationships have largely been overlooked in the new agreements.

One response to criticism has been the equalisation process where states and territories can negotiate for

additional funds through the Commonwealth Grants Commission. However, while this may result in funding more closely related to need, the process and choice of indicators of need is potentially ad hoc and arbitrary. And there is no guarantee that these extra funds will end up in the health service budget.

At the state level, the goals of efficiency and equity have been more explicitly addressed. The development of casemix funding in Victoria, and its adoption by elsewhere, signalled a clear emphasis on operational efficiency. The New South Wales approach is, by contrast, based explicitly on equity considerations. It uses weighted capitation funding, where funds are distributed on the basis of population adjusted for indicators of health service needs.

Two main issues have arisen from this parting of ways in funding approaches. First, the autonomy of health departments in developing funding mechanisms may promote innovation, but may also result in a duplication of effort. The design of funding mechanisms raises a wide range of technical, bureaucratic and political issues that may be better dealt

"The lack of understanding about societies' values and objectives has led to the de facto development of objectives by health system bureaucrats and service providers."

with cooperatively, rather than by different groups in relative isolation. This has led to some evidence of national initiatives in the development of casemix funding.

More importantly, the divergence in approaches raises questions about the relevance of the approaches across the Australian population as a whole. With casemix funding justified largely by efficiency goals, and weighted capitation justified largely by equity considerations, what of the values and objectives of the populations of different states and territories? It seems rather extreme to suggest that the people of Albury and Wodonga have such different standpoints on health services that they would support the different approaches taken by their relevant health departments.

It appears likely that Australians generally would support a mix of efficiency and equity considerations. This implies that health departments should be drawing on others' experiences with casemix and capitation to learn more of the useful aspects of the two approaches. This reconciliation should be fundamental to the development of health service funding in future years for two reasons.

First, while state and territory health departments are in the best position to determine the health service needs of their populations, the funding of health services should reflect the values of the whole Australian population, which pays for them.

Second, neither casemix nor weighted capitation represents the final word in achieving efficiency and equity goals. A combination of these approaches is more powerful than either in isolation.

Dr Stuart Peacock is a senior lecturer in the Health Economics Unit at the Centre for Health Program Evaluation at Monash University.

Drama treats ahead in '99

A visit by a respected Indonesian theatre troupe, an Asian orchestra tour and an international theatre workshop festival are just some of the activities on the Monash University performing arts calendar in 1999.

The executive director of the Office of Performing and Visual Arts, Mr Stephen Dee, said the new program underlined Monash's continuing commitment to the arts and the artistic community.

"Monash is establishing a program of arts projects which focus on two key areas: enhancing the Monash student experience and providing targeted support for arts education, training and research," Mr Dee said.

The program kicked off this month with two productions by the Centre for Drama and Theatre Studies, *Jacques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris*, and *Tryptych*, three short plays written and produced by Monash students and graduates.

The successful free lunchtime Concert Series has been expanded this year, with up to 10 productions at each of Monash's six Victorian campuses. The concerts, open to the public, feature a wide range of international and local artists.

Later this month will see a visit by the respected Gandrik theatre group, which managed to promote its message of social and political debate in Indonesia despite the restrictions of the Soeharto era.

Also this month, the Melbourne Symphony returns to the Robert Blackwood Hall for a new concert series. And evening concerts at Clayton have been expanded, featuring Monash musical ensembles with repertoire ranging from chamber music to symphonies and jazz.

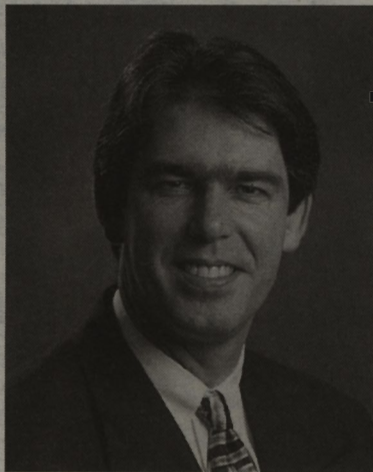
Mr Dee said a key long-term goal was to develop Monash as a centre for Asian performance development, with a program of concerts and festivals of South Asian music and dance.

In July, the New Monash Orchestra, comprising mostly students, will embark on a tour of Vietnam and Malaysia.

And in mid-1999, in conjunction with the Victorian College of the Arts, Monash will host an international theatre workshop festival featuring up to 10 of the world's best teachers and practitioners. The festival, which

will be conducted at the VCA, will comprise a series of workshops for professional theatre practitioners from around the country.

"The festival will allow Australians to work and study with leaders in the field," Mr Dee said. "They will be able to get the benefit of these experts' wisdom without leaving the country."



Mr Stephen Dee.

Monash also continues its support of the Schools Drama Festival, with the secondary school event to be expanded state wide in 1999.

Also during the year, star Russian pianist Yuri Rozum returns to Monash for performances and masterclasses in his role as an adjunct professor in the Music department.

Monash's visual arts calendar also got under way recently with a lively exhibition of Pop art from the University Collection and a show of historic and contemporary works from the La Trobe Regional Gallery at the Switchback Gallery at Monash Gippsland.

There will also be exhibitions of graduating student art work from the Faculty of Art and Design throughout the year.

"There is a vast array of artistic activities taking place at Monash and we want to make sure that students, staff and the public are aware of them," Mr Dee said. "We also aim to contribute in a unique way to the professional development of arts practitioners."

For more information about Monash's 1999 performing and visual arts program, call (03) 9905 1678.

Tryst with Tryptych

BY FRANCES MARTIN

What do fairies, goldfish and a woman named Esther have in common?

The answer is a program entitled *Tryptych*, featuring three innovative and original short plays by Monash University students and graduates, to be performed during March in the Drama Theatre of the Performing Arts Complex at Monash's Clayton campus.

Tryptych, deliberately misspelled to reflect the inherent mystery and intrigue of the pieces, is a program of not-to-be missed original theatre. Although dissimilar in content, some elements link the works. All three plays are first productions, directed by their authors. Each also includes an original music score, "an essential theatrical element designed to enhance the performance," says Betty Hanner, co-writer of 'Searching for Esther'. "I can't imagine the plays without it."

In the first play, 'Off With the Fairies', writer and director Rebecca Smith promises a light-hearted but interesting revisitation of childhood. This tale of six Australian Bush fairies, who communicate through song, movement and gibberish, hints at more serious environmental issues. Multi-talented Smith also composed the accompanying original music for didgeridoo, ocarina, and drums.

Alan and Bella, a couple who may or may not have a goldfish, are central characters of 'The Goldfish is Dead', written and directed by Darriel Jeffree. This play is a clever, insightful, and sometimes humorous look at communication – the way most of us talk at, rather than to each other. Jeffree's play is designed to make us wonder if the spoken word is actually a barrier to human relations.

The final play, 'Searching for Esther', written by close friends Marcia Pinski and Betty Hanner and directed by Hanner, focuses on three contemporary women, with the Biblical story of Esther as a backdrop. The piece examines the relationship of two women, Hadassah and Pearl, friends since childhood and now in their late 30s. Although raised with similar values, their paths diverge and their friendship becomes strained when it provokes questions of identity and creates conflict for Hadassah's adolescent daughter Malki.

To highlight the originality of the plays, a program of original music, led and performed by Monash students, will take place in the courtyard outside the Drama Theatre following both Saturday evening performances.

Described by Betty Hanner as 'chamber' theatre, these three short works, with their diverse themes, promise an intimate and satisfying theatrical experience. Hopefully, they will also alert us to future productions from these talented and enthusiastic new playwrights.

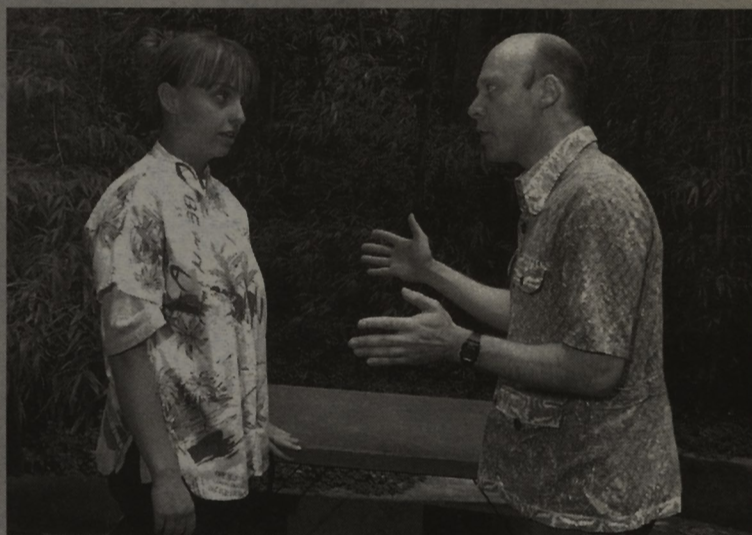
What: *Tryptych*

Where: Drama Theatre, Performing Arts Centre, Clayton campus

When: 8 pm, 19-20 and 23-27 March

Who: Centre for Drama and Theatre Studies

To book, telephone (03) 9533 0087 or (03) 9905 1111.



Theatre times three: Tim Edhouse and Danijele Toric in 'The Goldfish is Dead', top; Catherine Healy and Jessica Kent play up in 'Off With the Fairies', centre; and Lisa Parnis and Tara Jain connect in 'Searching for Esther'. Photos by Shannon Mattinson.

From cheese-making to play-making

'Sometimes, a major traumatic event can turn your life around.'

These are Darriel Jeffree's words, and for him the event that changed his life was the break-up of his marriage. It was also the catalyst for his play, 'The Goldfish is Dead', which evolved steadily over the subsequent seven years.

"The divorce made me reconsider my life," says Jeffree. "I quit my research job in the cheese-making industry and moved from Mt Gambier to Adelaide, where I enrolled at Flinders University and majored in drama and American studies. I also studied philosophy for three years."

Jeffree's life is full. In addition to writing and directing his own play, he writes poetry, is president of the Monash Postgraduate Association, has just been elected to the Monash University Council, and is completing his PhD in drama, focusing on the work of Antonin Artaud. "This French writer's philosophy made me see that my own play had a certain validity," he says.

'The Goldfish is Dead' is Jeffree's first play, but he hopes not his last. "I have visions of becoming a full-time playwright, and perhaps even directing other plays. I would very much like to direct Chekov's *Uncle Vanya* one day."



'Fill', by Gippsland photographer Susan Purdy. The 1999 work is part of an exhibition of photographs, *Love Letters*, by the artist on show at the Helen Gory Galerie in Prahran until 3 April. A photographic technique pioneered by artist Man Ray in the 1930s, photograms are created by placing objects on photographic paper and exposing for shadows.

Streets tell their stories



For Monash academic Dr Andrew Brown-May, Melbourne's streets are more than just thoroughfares, revealing much about the past. Photo by Shannon Mattinson.

BY DEREK BROWN

Melbourne's streets provide us with a direct link to the city's past, according to a Monash University academic.

"Our streets are like a time machine," says Dr Andrew Brown-May, author of *Melbourne Street Life*. "I can place myself on a Melbourne street corner and get in touch with people who used the streets a hundred years ago."

"There were the newspaper boys who cried false headlines to sell

more papers, European buskers and acrobats, and the man who, in 1856, drowned in the six feet of slimy, muddy water that sometimes ran down Spencer Street in those years."

The book has taken Dr Brown-May, a lecturer in Monash's History department, 10 years of painstaking research, sorting through hundreds of public records dating back to the city's beginnings.

"The records tell us about the way people used the streets in the past. Every written complaint, every permit,

every request can be found in the public records."

He says the way Melbourne's streets have been used has always been a contentious issue.

"We think of public space, particularly streets, as belonging to everyone, but there has always been some sort of regulation," he says.

Melbourne Street Life is published by Art Scholarly Publishing. For more information, contact Dr Brown-May on (03) 9905 2192.

Bien sûr, Jacques Brel is alive and well ...

A cabaret celebrating the 70th anniversary of singer-songwriter Jacques Brel will be staged at Monash's Clayton campus next month.

Jacques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris celebrates the works of the late Belgian-born folk writer and composer, known for his burning imagery and brilliantly controlled rhythmic patterns.

The theatrical piece was devised and first performed in the US in the late 1960s, playing off-Broadway for about 1500 performances in its premiere season.

The Monash Centre for Drama and Theatre Studies production, set in a bar, features a cast of eight students and recent graduates playing up to 30 different characters ranging from prostitutes and workers to businessmen, poets and ballroom dancers.

Director Peter Fitzpatrick describes the production as a "drama show" rather than a concert, with the theme of a millennium dance party.

"The production is aimed at welcoming our new students with a little of the energy of our 'old' ones," he said. "Brel's work is hard-edged and angst-filled, but it's timeless music and the show is actually quite humorous in parts."

What: *Jacques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris*

Where: Drama Theatre, Performing Arts Centre, Monash University, Clayton

When: 8 pm, 4 to 6 March and 9 to 13 March

Who: Monash Centre for Drama and Theatre Studies

To book, telephone (03) 9905 1111.



Robin Hart and Elise Dickinson put their hearts into a Brel number. Photo by Shannon Mattinson.

POP shows its persistence

A new exhibition of works from the Monash University Collection shows the durable appeal of Pop art.

The Persistence of POP, at the Monash University Gallery until 24 April, goes some way towards answering those who question Pop's relevance for contemporary visual art practice.

In the late 1950s, Pop art was defined initially by British artists and quickly became synonymous with American post-war consumer culture and the work of artists such as Andy Warhol, Claes Oldenburgh and Roy Lichtenstein.

Australian artists, while aware of the Pop phenomenon, did not embrace its style or characteristics wholeheartedly or uncritically.

The Persistence of POP considers some of the ways aspects of Pop were employed by Australian artists such as Robert Rooney, Isabel Davies, Mike Brown and Richard Larter during the 1970s.

Works in the exhibition enable reflection on the revitalisation of Pop ideas within appropriation art of the 1980s and its renewed relevance to contemporary issues – the everyday, suburbia, kitsch, popular media, and experiences of the body and of space.

The impact of Pop can be seen in the airbrushed houses of Howard Arkley, the blow-up 'toys' of Christopher Langton, paintings by Maria Kozic, a floral arrangement of garbage bags by Gary Wilson and funky sculptures by Mikala Dwyer.

Pop's legacy is surprising, living on in art that is abstract, political and humorous.

What: *The Persistence of POP*

Where: Monash University Gallery, Clayton campus

When: Until 24 April

Also: Artists talks on 17 March at 1.30 pm

Who: Monash University Gallery on (03) 9905 4217

Free concerts on six campuses

Monash University has expanded its Free Lunchtime Concert Series for 1999.

As well as weekly concerts at Clayton during the semester, the series now has up to 10 concerts on each of the Gippsland, Peninsula, Caulfield, Berwick and Parkville campuses.

The concert series features a wide range of performances, from visiting international artists Maxim Fedotov and Galina Petrova (Russian violin/

piano duo) to well-established local artists John O'Donnell and Tony Gould.

The concerts will run from 1.10 pm to 2 pm on the following dates: 9 March, George Jenkins Theatre, Peninsula; 11 March, Music Auditorium, Robert Blackwood Hall, Clayton; 17 March, Clayfield Room, Caulfield; 29 March, Hexagon Theatre, Gippsland; 25 March, Cossar Hall, Parkville; and 20 April, Student Lounge, Berwick.

For a concert program, contact (03) 9905 9034.

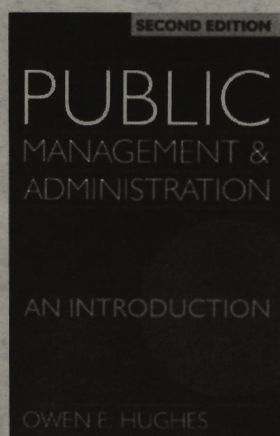


Public Management & Administration: An Introduction

Second Edition

By Owen E. Hughes
MacMillan Education Australia
(RRP \$38.95)

Technological change, globalisation and international competition have forced the public sectors of western societies to undergo radical change.



The old hierarchies of public management, dominant for most of the century, are being replaced by 'managerialism'.

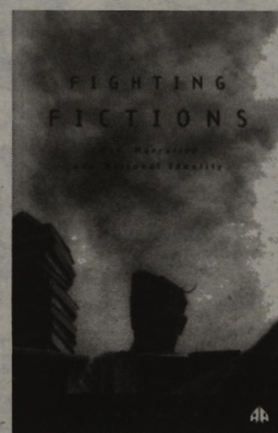
But rather than simply criticising the old bureaucracies, with their notorious paper chases and restrictive chains of command, *Public Management & Administration* looks at the reasons why modern societies have rejected more traditional models of administration.

Professor Owen Hughes, deputy head of Monash's Department of Management, provides an overview of theories and principles that form the basis of public management into the next century.

Fighting Fictions: War, Narrative and National Identity

By Kevin Foster
Pluto Press (RRP \$36.95)

Fighting Fictions challenges the idea that war fictions, histories and memoirs are a direct, unfiltered response to the experiences of battle. Instead, author Kevin Foster argues that wars are effectively written before they take place.



Using a variety of sources such as media accounts, cartoons, photographs, film, memoirs and campaign maps, Foster shows how society's myths about war precede and actually shape the way we represent and record conflict.

With a focus on the Falklands War, the author also uses examples from the first and second World Wars, the Spanish Civil War and the Gulf War.

Dr Kevin Foster is a lecturer in the English department at Monash University.

All books featured in 'Inprint' are available or can be ordered at Monash's four on-campus bookshops.

• CITSU (Caulfield) (03) 9571 3277 • Clayton (03) 9905 3111 • Gippsland (03) 5122 1771 • Peninsula (03) 9783 6932

Orientation a success

By ADAM MULLER

From abseiling and accounting to mentoring and mechanical engineering, the full Monash University experience was on display recently during Orientation 1999.

For the thousands of students new to Monash, Orientation provided a rare glimpse of what's ahead – inside the classroom as well as outside.

Monash Orientation director Associate Professor Ian Ward said the annual event went off like clockwork.

"One of our primary goals during Orientation is to get new students involved, whether it be in academic activities, sporting clubs or social events," Dr Ward said.

"The turnouts to the opening ceremonies at the various campuses – particularly at Caulfield, which was outstanding – show that the model we have developed is very successful."

Dr Ward said Orientation was the one time in the university calendar when students had the opportunity to see and sample nearly every aspect of university life.

"They can ask questions, explore and generally enjoy themselves," he said. "Research continues to support the idea of a link between a smooth transition to university life and academic and social success."

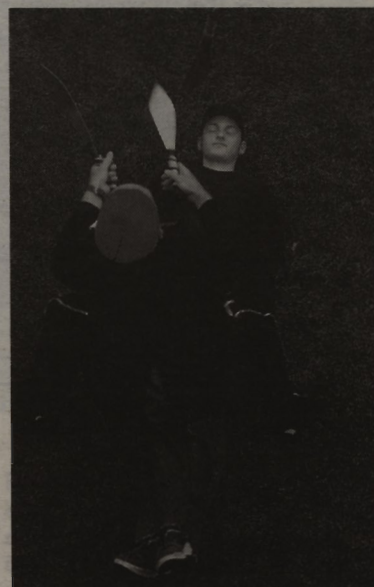
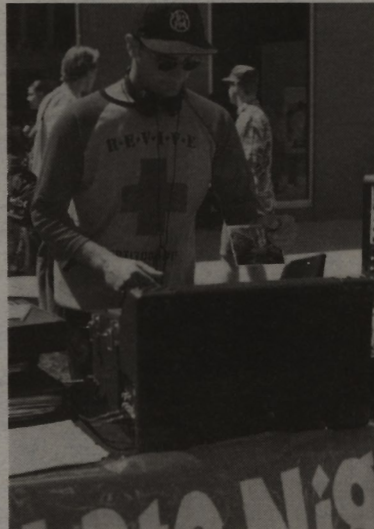
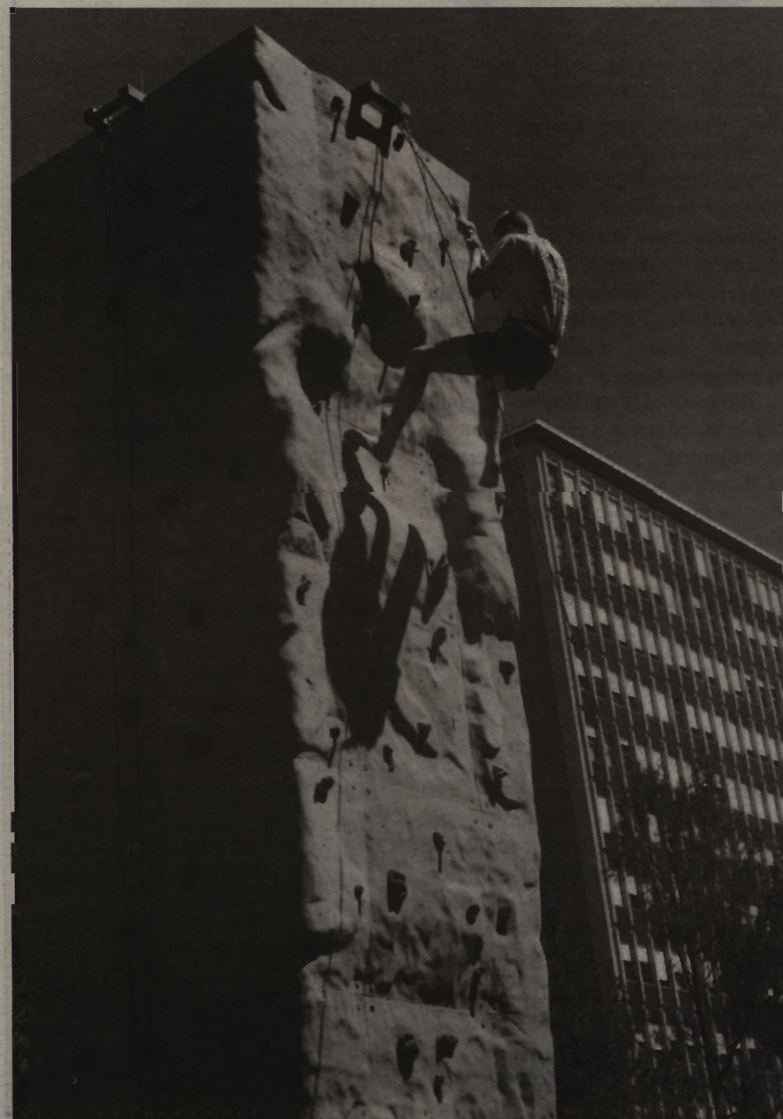
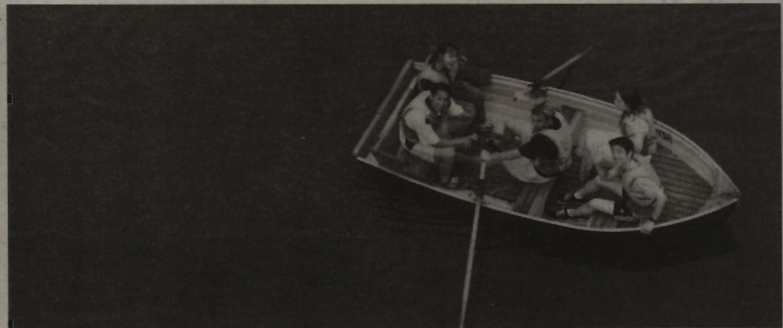
Activities at Orientation 1999 ranged from the educational to the exotic, with fire-eaters and knife-jugglers at Caulfield, boating forays

for Parkville students, trampolining and tango at Clayton and much more.

Many students used the opportunity to sign up for tutorials and to get to know the lecturers, tutors and classmates who will play a major role in their lives in the coming year.

The first Orientation sessions specifically for parents and partners were successfully staged at Clayton and Peninsula campuses, attracting scores of adults interested in learning how to help new students manage the move from secondary school.

Monash will hold a special Orientation Summit on 16 April for academics and other staff to review Monash's existing program of activities and plan for Orientation 2000.

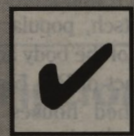


Fun while the sun shines: Views of Orientation 1999, above and left, by photographers Elizabeth Dias, Andrew Barcham and lastword.



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MONASH UNIVERSITY NEWS

Published by University Marketing & Development, Monash University
Edited by Josie Gibson (03) 9905 2085, fax (03) 9905 2097
or email josie.gibson@adm.monash.edu.au

Views expressed by contributors in *Monash News* are not necessarily endorsed by Monash University.

Printed by Westgate Park Print Centre, Port Melbourne, Victoria.

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For media inquiries, contact David Bruce on (03) 9905 2040.