MONASH TO MOUNT ATTACK ON RSI

Monash University is to establish an Occupational Health Service with a brief to identify and, as far as possible, head off potential health problems associated with working conditions in the University.

The University has budgeted more than $100,000 to set up and staff the Service, one of whose early priorities will be to investigate ways of tackling the growing RSI (Repetition Strain Injury) problem, which is causing concern particularly among female keyboard staff.

Announcing the new Service this week, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor Kevin Westfold, said the University recognised that RSI was a very real threat to the health and future employment prospects of a growing number of workers.

The Service, which will be one of the most comprehensive units of its kind in any Australian university, would be in a position to make a very positive contribution to the fight against many other work-related conditions as well as RSI, he said. These would include problems arising out of handling of dangerous chemicals and organisms and those associated with excessive heat or noise.

Professor Westfold said that Associate Professor Tony Ryan, acting head of the Monash Department of Social and Preventive Medicine, had been appointed director of the Service.

"Dr Ryan will introduce a very much more specialised approach to health problems than has been possible before. He has just completed an 18-month Commonwealth-funded investigation into RSI problems in the public service and is currently analysing the results. He also heads a clinic at Footscray that deals with people suffering RSI—not only keyboard operators, but other workers engaged in process-type occupations.

"We are also appointing to the service an occupational nurse who will be able to visit departments to give advice and counselling on work-related matters, as well as visiting staff in their homes if they’ve been off work for sustained periods.

"To supplement these services further, we have engaged a consultant ergonomist, Mr David Caple, who will work closely with Bob Lothian, a University specialist in organisation and methods. Together, they will be looking at office and laboratory furniture and equipment, as well as studying rest periods and the way word processors are being used to devise ways in which work patterns found to cause RSI can be broken up."

Professor Westfold said the University would engage the services of an occupational therapist to assist RSI sufferers to cope in their homes, and would increase the hours that the sessional physiotherapist presently spends in the Sports Centre specifically to assist in the treatment of work-related conditions.

Other aspects of the University’s new health, welfare and safety initiative will be the implementation of training programs under the guidance of the Safety Officer, Alan Wilson, to help increase safety awareness on campus, and the appointment of Bert Cook as worker’s-compensation insurance officer to work closely with insurance companies in speeding up the claims process.

Dr Ryan will be the principal speaker at a lunchtime meeting on RSI to be held on Monday, March 18, in the Alexander Theatre

The meeting, sponsored by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Martin and chaired by Professor Westfold, will begin at 1.10 p.m. Adrian van den Bergen will speak on behalf of the General Staff Association.

UNIVERSITY’S $4m COMPUTER “BUY”

The Monash Computer Centre today will commission its latest acquisition, a Burroughs B7800 computer worth more than $3 million, plus a million dollars’ worth of software.

In return, Monash will pay Burroughs—one dollar.

The transaction has been arranged in conjunction with the Victorian Government through its “Offset Program”. The arrangement is intended to provide a significant boost to Monash’s undergraduate teaching and to research.

It will also allow state government departments access to the computer and will provide free computing services for private sector projects judged by the Department of Industry, Commerce and Technology to be of economic significance.

The triple-processor B7800 is now about five years old. It was previously rented to the Victorian Gas and Fuel Corporation.

The Director of the Monash Computer Centre, Dr Cliff Bellamy, said today that the commissioning of the B7800 was one of two major developments in the Computer Centre this year.

The other has been the completion of a new computing laboratory housing 350 computer terminals designed to provide facilities for teaching students, mainly in computer science, engineering and mathematics. (Next week, the beginning of the 1985 academic year, 800 first-year mathematics students will have their first introduction to the B7800.
IVF PLANS: CRITICISMS 'PREMATURE'

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Ray Martin, said today that much "misinformation" had been circulated about the University's proposal to make the in vitro fertilisation techniques and technologies pioneered by Professor Carl Wood's team available through clinics in the United States. As a result, unwarranted fears were being sown in the minds of the public.

Professor Martin was responding to a statement released by Bishop Oliver Heyward, chairman of the Social Responsibilities Commission of the Anglican Church, urging Monash Council to reject the proposal.

Bishop Heyward said that the moves "might give rise to the sale of human embryos", and urged that IVF research "should not be undertaken for the pursuit of personal financial gain beyond the ordinary professional remuneration at present received by those who work in this area."

Professor Martin said in a prepared statement that negotiations aimed at establishing a company to transfer the IVF technology were still continuing.

He went on: "A proposal is currently in preparation, and will be discussed at a future meeting of the Monash University Council. It is premature at this stage, therefore, to speculate on the form any agreement might take.

"However, the University has at all times sought to make it clear that 'the sale of human embryos' and 'traffic in persons' that Bishop Heyward refers to is specifically excluded from all consideration."

"Draft recommendations so far considered by the University have made it plain that any IVF clinics set up in the United States would be subject to the laws of the State of Victoria, or of the relevant American legislature—whichever is the more stringent—and to the requirements of the ethics committees of the various Victorian hospitals in which IVF procedures are carried out.

'Bishop Heyward's Commission can be assured that all possible safeguards against the 'pursuit of personal financial gain' by members of Monash University will be built into whatever final agreement is drawn up.

"The development of clinics using Monash in vitro fertilisation techniques is specifically aimed at assisting those people—husbands and wives—who are afflicted with the problems of infertility. There is no possibility of its being extended into the areas that Bishop Heyward mentions.'"

NEW DEAN ON THE JOB

Professor W. R. A. Muntz has now taken up his appointment as Dean of the Faculty of Science. Professor Ross Day, who has been acting Dean for the past few months, has now returned to the department of Psychology, where he can be contacted on ext. 3950.

BICYCLE MARKING

Monash cyclists are advised that police will be at the corner of Greta Street and Dandenong Road, Clayton, between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. on Sunday, March 3, to mark bicycles for recovery if stolen.

ARTS ESSAY WRITING COURSES

Short, intensive essay writing courses for Arts students will be offered by HEARU in first term. Each course will consist of two one-hour classes per week for four weeks.

The first series of courses will begin on Monday, March 11, and the second on Wednesday, April 10.

Class times: Mondays and Wednesdays at 12 noon; Mondays and Wednesdays at 3.15 p.m.; and Tuesdays and Thursdays at 4.15 p.m.

Students may register for these courses and seek further information from the secretary, HEARU, Room 337, Law building.

RESEARCH GRANTS

Marine Sciences

The Marine Research Allocations Advisory Committee is currently inviting applications for support for research projects in Marine Science and Technology for 1986.

Further information and application forms are available from Mrs L. Sefton (ext. 3073).

Applications close with Mr B. D. Shields on Friday, March 22, 1985.

ARGS GRANTS: APPLY NOW

Applications have been called for ARG5 support of research projects at Monash University for 1986. They should be submitted to Mr B. D. Shields, Assistant Registrar, in the University Offices, by Wednesday, March 27.

All 1985 grantees have been sent the forms they will need for renewal applications. Where the ARG5 wants progress reports, the relevant grantees have been informed separately.

The Committee is seeking applications from the physical, biological, applied and social sciences, the humanities, and education.

Copies of initial application forms and other documents are available from Mrs Linda Sefton (ext. 3073).

IMPORTANT DATES FOR STUDENTS

March 4 First Term begins
First Term begins for M.Eng.Sc. by coursework

March 11 Orientation for part-time and mature-age students (family day) 12 noon. Sports and Recreation Centre

March 12 Publication of results for Law Summer Term

March 15 Closing date for change of course, subject or unit taught in the first half-year or over the whole teaching year
Last date for discontinuation of all studies by not-for-degree, diploma, bachelor degree and Master preliminary candidates, and by Master candidates defined as coursework candidates, to be eligible for 100% refund of the 1985 Union fees paid (not applicable to students taking Summer Term subjects.)
Closing date for new enrolments for L.L.M. by coursework not taking Summer Term subjects

March 17 Orientation day for parents of first-year undergraduate students 11.00 a.m. Robert Blackwood Hall.

March 18 Publication of results for Education Summer Term

March 29 Graduation Ceremony—Science
Last date for return of T.E.A.S. application forms to the Commonwealth Department of Education in order to receive payment of entitlements retrospective to 1 January 1985

POSITIONS VACANT

New positions available, not previously listed in Sound:

COMPTROLLER
Administration Data Processing—Computer Systems Officer 1

EDUCATION
Research Assistant

MEDICINE
Physiology—Technical Officer A

SCIENCE
Mathematics—Jun. Stenographer Gr 2

UNION
Jun. Clerk; Typist/Clerk/Receptionist (Jun. Clerk)

Copies of relevant advertisements can be sighted in the following:
Room 101, First Floor, University Offices Annex
Telephone inquiries about academic positions should be directed to extension 4047, clerical positions to 4038, and technical positions to 4055.

All applications must carry a job reference number obtainable from Staff Branch.

Authorised by K.W. Bennetts, Information Officer