

MONASH News

Research, news and opinion from Monash University

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FACULTY FOCUS:

Science

Each edition in 2004 highlights the work of one of the 10 faculties



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Fault finding: Dr Roberto Weinberg is searching for gold in fault zones.

Photo: Melissa Di Ciero

Mineral exploration

Faults hide a golden prize

Australian geologists believe they can explain an unusually regular pattern of gold distribution in Western Australia, a finding they believe could improve predictions of where large gold deposits can be found.

Dr Roberto Weinberg, a senior lecturer in Monash's School of Geosciences, was part of the research team that investigated the regular gold distribution pattern in the 2.7 billion-year-old Boulder-Lefroy fault zone.

Four of Australia's richest known gold deposits, each endowed with more than 100 tonnes of gold, and including the 1800 tonne giant Golden Mile at Kalgoorlie, occur at 30–40 km regularly-spaced intervals along this fault zone.

"Despite the long history of gold exploration and hundreds of years of investigation, determining a predictable pattern of gold distribution has remained elusive," Dr Weinberg said. "This is because of the wide variety of factors involved in gold mineralisation."

Large gold deposits result when vast amounts of fluids carrying dissolved gold within the Earth's crust converge into narrow paths within the fault system.

Dr Weinberg collaborated with Dr Paul Hodkiewicz and Professor David Groves

from the University of Western Australia on the research, which found that the major factor controlling gold endowment was variations in the direction of the fault zone.

Their research is published in the July issue of the international journal *Geology*.

"Every rock has tiny pores, and the fluid migrates through these. When there was seismic activity along the Boulder-Lefroy fault zone, parts of the fault dilated – increasing the size of the pores in the rock – while others contracted, depending on variations in the fault's direction," Dr Weinberg said.

"During such events, fluid migrated into the areas of dilation, and it is in these sections that rich gold deposition resulted."

The research team believes that the

richness of the Boulder-Lefroy area is related to the existence of few, very effective zones of dilation along the fault zone, spaced at distances that maximised the catchment of gold-carrying crustal fluids.

"Large dilational sites along faults should be the focus of exploration, as they are obviously key determinants of gold mineralisation," Dr Weinberg said. "Within these broad dilational sites, other physical and chemical factors may control the further focusing of fluids and the precipitation of gold out of the fluids, but the dilational sites are a good starting point for exploration."

– Penny Fannin

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Midsummer in mid-winter

The eagerness of flowers and the joy of comedy will combine at Monash later this month in an energetic production of one of Shakespeare's most popular comedies – *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Directed by Bell Shakespeare associate artist Anina Volska and drawing together a youthful cast of great charm and physicality, this lively and enchanting production will delight its audiences.

On the night of the new moon, all of Athens is abuzz with arrangements for a royal wedding as fairy and mortal worlds collide in the forest, sending magic spells flying. The trials of two pairs of star-crossed lovers entwine with the marital discord of the king and queen of the fairies.

For more details, see page 6.



New approach needed to keep young drivers safe

Accident prevention

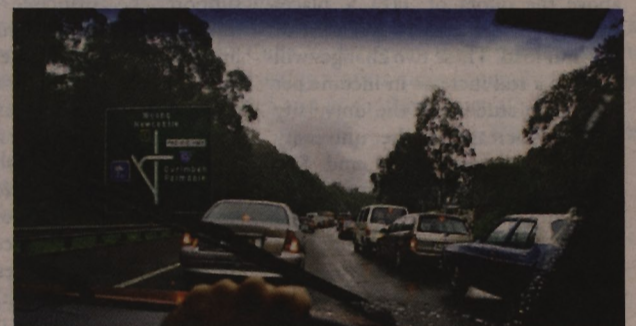
Vulnerable young drivers worldwide need a more supervised and supported introduction to different driving experiences, a Monash University Accident Research Centre report has recommended.

A review of licensing systems throughout Western countries revealed that gradually introducing different driving conditions to new drivers could be the key to reducing their chances of becoming crash statistics.

Research fellow Dr Teresa Senserrick said the review indicated that newly licensed drivers were one of the groups most vulnerable to crash involvement, particularly in their first year of driving.

"Throughout the world, authorities have become increasingly aware that traditional methods such as standard driver education have not worked," Dr Senserrick said. "An alternative has been to introduce requirements and restrictions on drivers in stages as they learn to drive."

"Crash risks of novice drivers are inflated by the effects of both youth and inexperience. The aim of a graduated driver licensing system is to reduce this risk by limiting driving to safer, lower-risk conditions and progressively lifting restrictions as experience is gained."



Experience necessary: Gradually introducing different conditions to new drivers could be a key to reducing risk.

Dr Senserrick said the review, sponsored by VicRoads, showed several initiatives had revealed a clear link with injury and crash reduction, including:

- increasing the minimum learner period
- night-time driving restrictions for probationary drivers
- passenger restrictions for probationary drivers
- compulsory zero blood alcohol content for learner and probationary drivers
- compulsory seat belt use for learner and probationary drivers.

"Two initiatives considered to be the most effective in parts of the US, Canada and New Zealand are the night-time driving and peer passenger restrictions for probationary drivers – neither of which are included in any current Australian model," Dr Senserrick said.

"The time could be right to review current models and develop additional initiatives. And while some restrictions may be initially seen as socially unacceptable or likely to lack community support, the overseas experiences suggest they are well received by the majority of the community and that acceptance improves after they have been in place for a year or so.

"Victoria is a world leader in road safety initiatives, and the community is very accepting of new ways to reduce road trauma. We don't want novice drivers to be overconfident and feel they can handle any situation. It is important they recognise their limitations and are provided with as much experience in safer situations as possible."

– Allison Harding

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From the vice-chancellor's desk

A monthly column by the vice-chancellor of Monash University,
Professor Richard Larkins

This year's election has significant implications for Australia's higher education sector.

Universities are in the process of responding to the Higher Education Support Act 2003. At Monash, the University Council decided to increase the student contribution amount (HECS fee) for most of its courses by 25 per cent, making the average student contribution to the cost of their university education about 40 per cent. Depending on the course, the HECS debt would vary from around \$14,000 to \$40,000.

Offsetting this increase in student contributions, the salary graduates can earn before repaying the interest-free government loan has increased from \$24,000 to \$35,000.

In addition, there has been an increase in the number of full-fee-based Australian undergraduate places that can be admitted over and above the quota of 'HECS' places from 25 per cent to 35 per cent of the unit load. These two changes will provide a real increase in income per Australian student at the university and an increase in the university income of between \$30 and \$40 million annually by 2007.

Eighty per cent of this increased income will be used to improve education and support services for students, and 20 per cent will be used to expand current equity and scholarships programs for socially, economically and educationally disadvantaged students.

The policy proposed by the Labor Party would reverse the increase in HECS charges and phase out the full-fee-based undergraduate places for Australian students. Full indexing of the Commonwealth

Grants to universities would be introduced and 20,000 new places would be funded. However, there would be no increase in funds available per student, and the overall effect would be a substantial decrease in the income to universities such as Monash. This would inevitably prevent the planned improvement in educational support services and the expansion of equity programs.

Along with many of my fellow vice-chancellors, I strongly support the principle of public investment in higher education and in not imposing further demands on students. Our universities desperately require increased funding if our educational system is to be internationally competitive. As the election campaign unfolds, it is hoped that both parties recognise the public good that comes from increased public investment in higher education and that the current policies are substantially modified.

Benjamin Disraeli, 130 years ago, pronounced to the House of Commons: "Upon the education of the people of this country the fate of this country depends". His words are as true in Australia today as they were in Great Britain all those years ago.

— Richard Larkins



Asian boom needs social safety net

Globalisation

Globalisation has been a mixed blessing for Asian economies because gains for business have been mixed with pain for the region's poorer citizens, a Monash workshop has heard.

Opportunities afforded by the rapid growth of the global economy have produced sharp reminders of the need for adequate social protection regimes for workers, rural-urban migrants and children, Professor Chris Nyland, of the International Business Research Unit, told participants in the workshop on social protection in South Asia, China and Malaysia.

He said economic crises caused by globalisation in the region were felt most keenly by the nations that had failed to establish effective social security networks.

Professor Nyland, professor of international business in the Department of Management, said a healthy social protection system might be a future requirement for effective free market structures in Asia.

The workshop was convened by Professor Nyland and Dr Wendy Smith, a senior lecturer in the department who is also director of the Centre for Malaysian Studies in the Monash Asia Institute.

It underpinned a research program, instigated by the department in 2000, on social protection in Asia.

The program has grown to include larger projects – funded by the faculty, the Australian Research Council and the Monash Institute for Global Movements – on international trade and human rights, global migration and social security, and the link between international business and human security in Asia.

International speakers at the workshop included Dr Sity Daud from University Kebangsaan Malaysia and Professor Sujata Patel from Pune University, India.

— Robyn Anns

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From left: Dr Wendy Smith, Dr Sity Daud and Professor Chris Nyland.

Malaysian librarians train at Monash

Staff at the Monash University Library recently conducted a specialised training program for a group of Malaysian librarians focusing on the delivery of library services in the digital era.

The three-week program covered library operations and policy and provided participants with an insight into how the library manages and runs its digital and physical resources. Participants also gained hands-on experience by spending time in key library sections such as reference and loans.

The library's corporate services and international development director, Mrs Chooi Hon Ho, who co-ordinated the program, said tailor-made training programs conducted by library staff were attracting increasing interest from library professionals outside Monash.

"We have conducted training programs for librarians from our Malaysia campus for several years. The success of our internal programs has led to many requests from library organisations in Malaysia to open our training program

to non-Monash participants," she said.

The group of 12 participants included librarians from tertiary institutions across Malaysia and the National Library in Kuala Lumpur, as well as two librarians from Monash University Malaysia. All are members of the Librarians' Association of Malaysia (Persatuan Pustakawan Malaysia), which was instrumental in arranging the program with Monash.

University Librarian Ms Cathrine Harboe-Ree said the program was an opportunity to showcase Monash's library as a leader in the provision of digital services.

"Monash University has a deservedly well-respected name in Malaysia," she said. "This program provided an opportunity to strengthen our ties with the Malaysian community, and we are hopeful the training program will be offered again in the future."

— Karen Stichtenoth

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Briefly

NHMRC grants

Monash researchers have been awarded \$488,125 in development grants by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) for projects exploring new vaccines for HIV, the development of medical diagnostic devices and the development of drugs to treat metastatic cancers.

Of the 14 grants announced nationally, three went toward Monash research. The recipients were:

■ Dr Martin Lackmann, a senior research fellow in the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, who received \$204,125 to refine and improve the effectiveness of two proteins to selectively target, and potentially kill, tumour cells from a number of cancers, including melanoma

■ Dr Lisa Martin, a senior lecturer in the School of Chemistry, who will use her \$144,500 grant to develop a new medical diagnostic device that could help detect a range of medical conditions

■ Dr Hans Netter and Dr Rod MacFarlan from the Department of Microbiology, who received a \$139,500 grant to further their development of a vaccine for human immunodeficiency virus 1 (HIV-1).

Herb Feith foundation

A foundation honouring the memory of one of Australia's finest scholars of Indonesia and former Monash University politics professor, Herb Feith, was launched last month.

Herb Feith's example and idealism inspired the founding of the Volunteer Graduate Scheme that developed into Australian Volunteers International.

The Monash University Herb Feith Foundation has been set up to promote a range of educational activities. These include establishing the Herb Feith Chair for the study of Indonesia to carry on his academic work through research and teaching on Indonesia.

Graduate wins Fulbright

A medical graduate from Monash University has been awarded the Australian Fulbright (Alumni) Association's prestigious WG Walker Memorial Award.

Dr Ranjana Srivastava, who graduated with first class honours in 1997, received the award in April. Presented to the top-ranked postgraduate Fulbright recipient in Australia, it is named in honour of Professor Bill Walker, the inaugural president of the Australian Fulbright Association.

The \$30,000 award will support a 12-month fellowship for Dr Srivastava, beginning this month, at the MacLean Centre for Clinical Medical Ethics at the University of Chicago. The postgraduate fellowship program offers high-level training in communication and ethics in medicine.

Since completing her studies at Monash, Dr Srivastava has trained as a physician and undertaken specialist training in oncology at various hospitals including Royal Melbourne and Launceston General.

Research ties with Europe

Monash has continued to take a leading role in developing research ties between Australia and Europe via a renewed agreement to provide fellowships for Australian scholars to carry out research at the European University Institute (EUI).

Under an agreement first signed in 1996 between the Australian European University Institute Fellowships Association Incorporated (AEUIFAI) and the EUI, doctoral and postdoctoral fellowships have been awarded to Australian researchers to spend periods of time at the EUI.

The AEUIFAI is an independent body made up of representatives from a number of Australian universities and the European Union Delegation in Canberra.

Monash has taken a major role in the association in terms of funding and leadership, and its secretary and public officer, Dr Peter Howard, is a senior lecturer in the School of Historical Studies.

In early June, the AEUIFAI and the EUI signed a renewal of their agreement of cooperation. Monash, which contributed seeding funds of \$90,000, has agreed to contribute a further \$5000 each year for the next three years and make available the resources of the Monash University Prato Centre. The School of Historical Studies is also providing administrative support.

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Sleeping giants awake

Animal conservation

Zoos are the 'sleeping giants' of conservation, with the power to transform visitors into ambassadors for wildlife preservation, Monash researcher Dr Sue Broad has found.

Dr Broad, a researcher in the Monash Tourism Research Unit in the Business and Economics faculty, is looking at how the latent interest of zoo visitors can be harnessed for the animal conservation cause worldwide.

"The experience of visitors, as they stroll around Victoria's zoos, can be used to educate and motivate them to help the world's endangered species," Dr Broad said.

A research partnership between Zoos Victoria and Monash University was established in 2003 to critically examine the relationship between the interpretive experience and the achievement of conservation outcomes at Zoos Victoria's three properties – Melbourne Zoo, Healesville Sanctuary and Werribee's Open Range Zoo.

"Zoos are described as the sleeping giants of the conservation field because of the number and range of visitors, the extent of repeat visits and the potential to influence public beliefs, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours towards conservation," Dr Broad said.

She believes zoos can capitalise on the public demand for opportunities to interact with wildlife.



Long memories: Dr Sue Broad at the Trail of the Elephants, the new Melbourne Zoo experience, used to assess visitors' recall of wildlife preservation messages. **Photo: Greg Ford**

"Of all the reasons for visiting a zoo, recreation is the least valued as a justification for keeping animals in captivity, but education is a major priority today," she said.

For example, the seal enclosure at Melbourne Zoo includes one special seal that was rehabilitated by zoo staff after being injured by plastic rubbish. He acts as an unofficial ambassador for the environmental cause, and his presence reminds visitors to dispose of litter thoughtfully.

"Zoos want their visitors to develop a positive attitude to wildlife conservation and, ultimately, modify their behaviour," Dr Broad said.

"Realistically, we can't expect someone to come to a zoo and go away a changed person. They need to receive information and reinforcement from the zoo experience through interpretation such as a presentation by a zoo keeper, an exhibit design, static displays and interactive media to instigate change," she said.

Dr Broad and her team have measured how long visitors spend at each part of Melbourne Zoo's latest experience, the Trail of the Elephants. They found that visitors recalled significant conservation messages incorporated in the trail.

In the next phase of the research project, they will measure message exposure and recall, and behavioural intention and actual behaviour, at Healesville Sanctuary and Werribee's Open Range Zoo.

The project, 'Fostering sustainable behaviour through environmental interpretation: a case study of Zoos Victoria', is due for completion next year.

– Robyn Anns

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Cloud chaser: Professor Michael Reeder and, below, a Morning Glory cloud formation.

Photo: Greg Ford

Predicting a storm front



Photo: Brian Seymour

Forecasting

The Morning Glory cloud formations regularly seen each September and October in the Gulf of Carpentaria are being investigated by Monash meteorologists, who hope their studies will lead to more accurate predictions of tropical storms.

Professor Michael Reeder, Monash's chair of Meteorology in the School of Mathematical Sciences, and colleagues from the university's School of Geography and Environmental Science, as well as the Bureau of Meteorology and the University of Munich, are researching the origins of the Morning Glory cloud formation.

"Although Morning Glories occur in other parts of the world, Australia is the only place where they happen regularly, which makes it the perfect place to take observations," Professor Reeder said.

Usually, the spectacular natural phenomenon has its origin in sea breeze circulations that occur over Cape York

Peninsula. When the breeze crosses from east to west in the Gulf and continues into the evening, the southern part of the breeze produces the Morning Glory.

"When the sea breezes from either side of the Cape meet, they collide and generate a wave in the atmosphere. The waves are a bit like those on the surface of the ocean, and the clouds mark the crest of these atmospheric waves," he said.

Two distinct kinds of cloud lines develop over the Gulf during the dry season – the Morning Glory and the north Australian cloud line, which comprises a line of clouds that can stretch the entire length of the Gulf of Carpentaria.

"During the dry season, the cloud lines that form in the Gulf region are relatively shallow and do not produce rain, but during the wet season they may develop into thunderstorms with severe wind squalls and heavy rain showers," Professor Reeder said.

"It is the latter type of cloud line that is of particular interest to the Bureau of Meteorology, because these storms can affect large regions of

northern Australia including the Top End, and because thunderstorms are intrinsically difficult weather systems to forecast."

The underlying mechanism that determines the development of the cloud lines is the collision of sea breezes.

Professor Reeder and his colleagues have flown aircraft through the clouds, sampling them and determining the conditions that produce the different types of clouds.

This helps identify the sorts of meteorological observations that need to be incorporated into forecasting models in order to predict when the storm clouds will form, the severity of the storm, what time it will occur and how much rain it will produce.

"If we can accurately forecast storms in the Cape York region, that's the first step to forecasting storms more generally across the tropics and in southern Australia."

– Penny Fannin

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Overcoming hurdles in diagnosing depression

Mental health

Monash University researchers are developing tools to help general practitioners and support workers recognise depression in people with an intellectual disability.

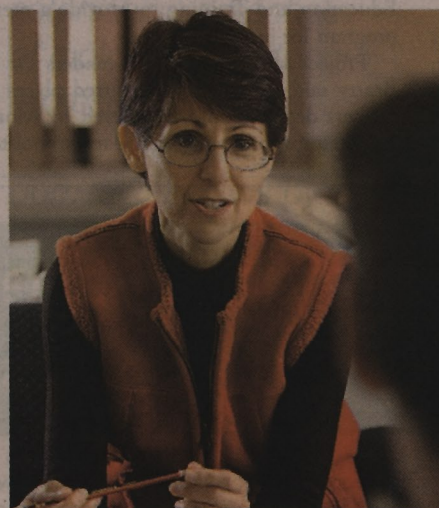
Dr Teresa Iacono, research director of the Centre for Developmental Disability Health Victoria, said identifying depression in disabled people who had communication problems was notoriously difficult.

The centre, part of Monash's Department of General Practice, aims to improve the quality of health care available to people with developmental disabilities and to promote awareness of issues affecting them among health professionals.

Dr Iacono said people with an intellectual disability were prone to mood disorders because of factors such as higher incidence of illness and brain abnormalities, as well as limited social support and poor social and coping skills.

"Depression in such people has been underestimated as there have long been problems with diagnosing their depression due to communication impairment, atypical presentations and lack of reliable and valid diagnostic criteria," Dr Iacono said.

De-institutionalisation had meant GPs were increasingly seeing patients with intellectual disability – but often did not have the training or knowledge to deal with them, she said.



Dr Teresa Iacono: Depression among people with an intellectual disability is underestimated.

Photo: Heath Missen

and did not rely on the person having to describe their emotions, which is usually the case in the diagnosis of depression. Workers and doctors needed to look for depressive mood, sleep and appetite disturbance, weight loss or gain, social isolation, and loss of energy and interest.

"Other signs to be alert to are tearfulness, diminished smiling, diminished laughing and irritable mood, which is often manifested by temper tantrums and verbal and physical abuse," Dr Iacono said.

The centre hopes to recruit up to 75 people throughout Melbourne and regional Victoria with intellectual disabilities who live in community residential units, and their support workers and GPs, to help refine the screening tools.

"We hope the checklist will help support workers decide if a visit to a GP is warranted because of suspected depression and will also be useful to the doctor," Dr Iacono said. "The GPs' tool will assist in the assessment process, and also in educating them about the behavioural symptoms indicative of depression in people who are unable to report their own feelings."

– Allison Harding

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"Problems in accessing assessment and intervention services result from the lack of appropriate assessment tools, the fact that GPs are rarely knowledgeable about intellectual disabilities, and that access to specialist psychiatrists is limited in Australia," Dr Iacono said.

The centre's \$50,000 funding to develop the screening tools – a checklist for use by support workers and an assessment tool for GPs – has come from the beyondblue Victorian Centre of Excellence in Depression and Related Disorders.

Dr Iacono said the criteria in the checklists, developed by the project's chief investigator and consultant psychiatrist, Dr Jennifer Torr, were based on observable signs and symptoms

Science sets its goals

Education quality

A university-wide survey of undergraduate and postgraduate students' experiences at Monash has prompted the Science faculty to improve its already high standards of teaching, learning and course administration.

The faculty performed well in the Monash Experience Questionnaire (MEQ), which sought students' opinions of their study experience as well as university administration and support services.

Ninety-two per cent of science students who participated said they were broadly satisfied with their study experience when responding to questions about feedback on work, effectiveness of staff in explaining things and the extent to which teaching staff worked hard to make a subject interesting.

The students also said they were broadly satisfied with the accessibility of student support and resources, use of information communication technologies and approaches to teaching and learning as well as access to teaching staff and assistance with problems.

Dean of Science Professor Rob Norris said although the results were pleasing, he had set faculty staff a goal of improving their performance even further through the introduction of additional review and quality improvement processes.

"The transition from secondary school to university involves changes in expectations and the development of new learning and social skills," Professor Norris said. "The outcomes of the MEQ highlight the importance of good communication and the need to establish clear expectations."

He said that while other universities had pursued niche degrees, the Science faculty had developed the generic Bachelor of Science as its flagship program. "The course offers flexibility for students to explore a range of science disciplines and then, through their chosen major sequence, develop a depth of knowledge and skills in their area of specialisation."

"At the same time, through specialist core units, science students develop essential generic skills that provide the basis for self-managed learning that employers seek. In a

rapidly changing world, technical knowledge fast becomes obsolete, but well-developed analytical and numeracy skills, effective communication and critical thinking stand the test of time."

These were all areas of the MEQ where science respondents reported high levels of satisfaction.

"The students who responded to this first survey have provided a wealth of information to consider," Professor Norris said. "Their views and insights will contribute to the future of science at Monash, and they have set a baseline that the faculty will seek to improve upon in future surveys."

"The faculty is pleased that science students across all of the campuses are satisfied with their study experience, but it also seeks to establish new standards in teaching, learning and course administration that others can only seek to emulate."

— Penny Fannin

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Heavenly transit

Astronomy buffs at Monash's Clayton campus recorded the transit of Venus as it crossed the face of the Sun on Wednesday 8 June.

The historic event – the first since 1882 – was witnessed by around 200 staff and students who watched images, captured by an automated telescope on the roof of a campus building, relayed to the big screen of a theatre in a nearby building.

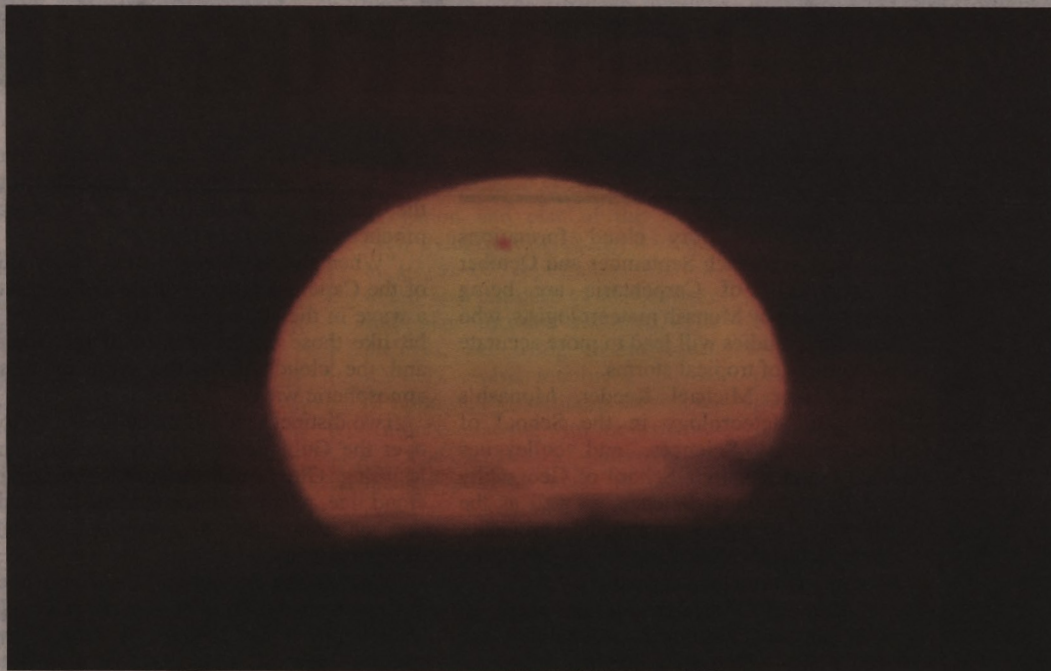
A small group also manned a telescope on the roof of the university's Menzies building from mid-afternoon until sunset.

Ms Susan Feteris, a lecturer and astronomy coordinator in the School of Physics and Materials Engineering, said the wait had been worth it.

"Nothing terribly exciting happened until 3.08 pm, when we saw the dark disk of Venus creep over the edge of the Sun," she said.

"The images we captured were very clear and well worth keeping. It was wonderful to share the event with so many people."

For more Monash images of the transit of Venus, visit www.spme.monash.edu.au/Venus/.



Planetary path: Venus crosses the face of the Sun.

Photo: Herschel Landes

Mastering the art of being a school principal

School leadership

A new course to train aspiring school principals begins at Monash University next month, following the Education faculty winning a Victorian Government tender to deliver a Master in School Leadership degree.

The masters degree tender was awarded along with another tender from the Department of Education and Training to provide a mentoring program for junior principals.

Project overseer for both tenders Dr Brenda Beatty said scholarship-supported places for the masters degree would be offered by Monash to 120 state primary and secondary school teachers

with identified leadership potential. She said 40 students would take up places in each of three consecutive semesters, beginning in August 2004.

"The course is designed to address the need for a clear pathway to principalship in Victorian state schools in anticipation of an imminent wave of retirements," Dr Beatty said.

"This is a new initiative for Australia, and the course is designed to help aspiring principals build confidence, skill, knowledge, professional connections and emotional preparedness to face the many challenges of the complex and rewarding work of being a school principal."

Designed to be completed part-time over two years, the course features four units – inner leadership, leading learning organisations, understanding environments, and a professional action research project – delivered on-campus, via off-campus learning and online.

Dr Beatty said that in the US and Canada, in order to be eligible for a principalship, masters-level courses and certification had been a requirement for some time. The main point of difference between these overseas courses and the Monash course was the emphasis it would place on emotional factors.

"The Monash course will support tomorrow's school leaders to create schools that are resilient learning communities where people can collaborate."

The author of a Canadian award-winning thesis titled 'Emotion matters in educational leadership', Dr Beatty put her theories into practice for three years at Texas State University – San Marcos, where she was an assistant professor in the Educational Administration department.

Dr Beatty, who joined Monash this year, praised the support provided by various Education faculty staff in the tendering process, including dean Professor Sue Willis, development manager Mrs Sarah Newton, administrative officer Ms Jean DeMel and associate dean, development, Professor Peter Gronn.

— Michele Martin

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Australia's political sovereignty compromised?



The Australia-US alliance has come under increasing scrutiny in recent months following forays into Australian domestic politics by Washington's ambassador in Canberra, Tom Schieffer, and by President Bush himself, writes **Dr David Wright-Neville**, a senior lecturer in Monash University's School of Political and Social Inquiry and a former senior intelligence analyst with the Australian Government.

Alexander Downer's recent claim that the pre-selection of Peter Garrett for the safe Labor seat of Kingsford-Smith would jeopardise the Australia-US alliance was a transparently opportunistic move.

But the political one-upmanship disguises a more sinister development; namely, the extent to which the government appears willing to compromise the concrete reality of Australia's political sovereignty for the sake of a less certain promise of strategic well-being and political self-interest.

Witness just a handful of instances culled from the last six months.

First there were the panicked howls of outrage inspired by Mark Latham's commitment to bring Australia's troops in Iraq home by Christmas. Rather than attack the integrity of Latham's suggestion on its merits, the government's initial response was to charge that the US alliance was at risk.

Second, there have been the astonishing breaches of diplomatic protocol represented by the forays into Australian domestic politics by both Washington's ambassador in Canberra, Tom Schieffer, and by President Bush himself.

One can imagine the Prime Minister's indignation had the Indonesian ambassador attended a fundraiser for Kevin Rudd, as Schieffer did for Downer, or if former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir ventured into Australian domestic politics on behalf of Latham in the same way that Bush poked his nose into our affairs.

It is a key tenet of international diplomatic protocol that leaders of foreign governments, as well as their ambassadorial representatives, desist from overt interference in the domestic politics of foreign states. Indeed, in the past this practice has been held to be so important that flaunting it drew the serious charge of a breach of a state's political sovereignty.

Finally, we had the spectacle last month of Alexander Downer again warning the Australian public about the deleterious consequences for the alliance that could flow from Garrett's foray into federal politics as a member of the ALP.

But the Howard Government's attempt, with apparent US acquiescence, to turn the

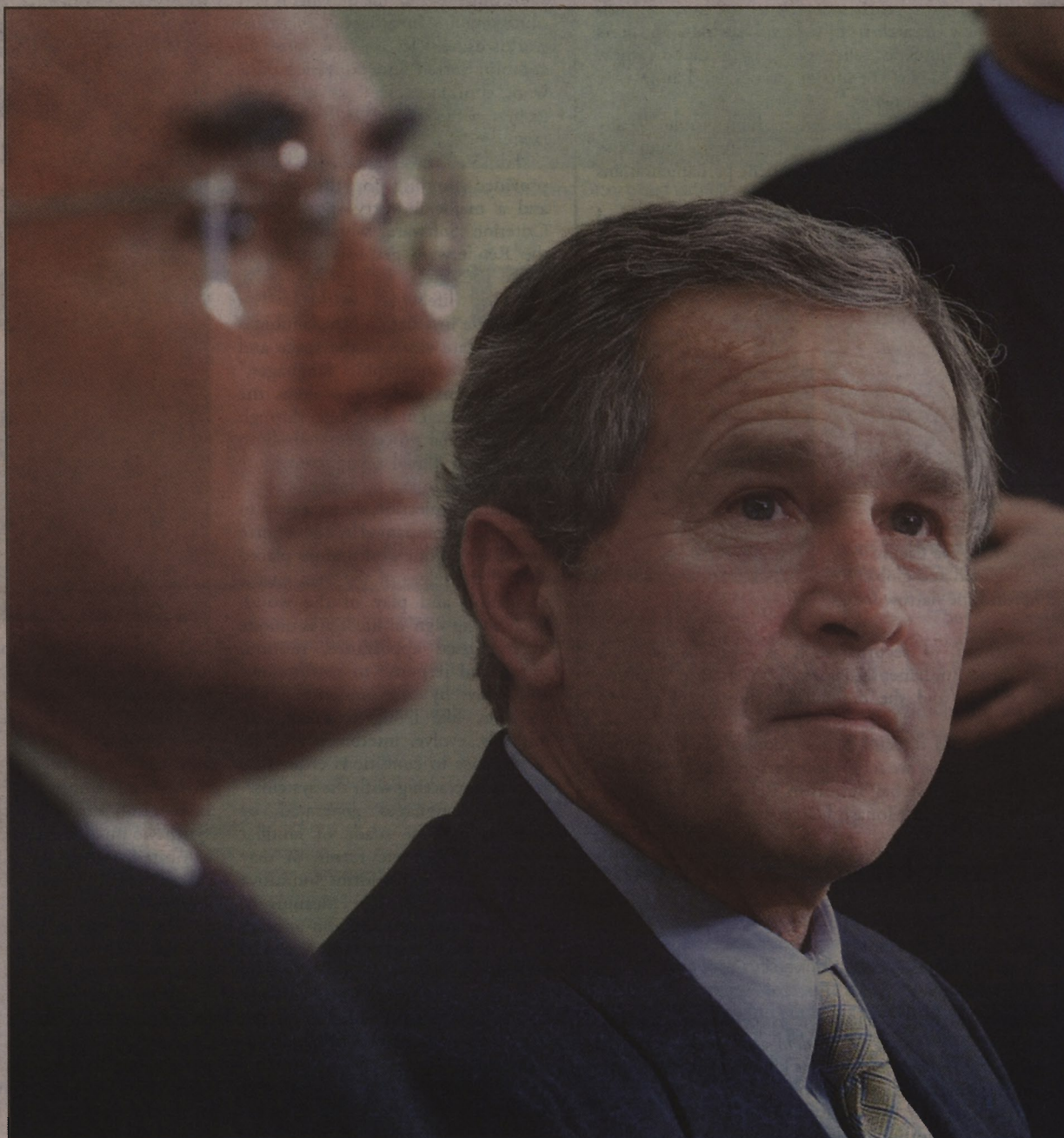


Photo: Fairfaxphotos



"There have been the astonishing breaches of diplomatic protocol represented by the forays into Australian domestic politics by both Washington's ambassador in Canberra, Tom Schieffer, and by President Bush himself."

Photo: Fairfaxphotos

US alliance to its electoral advantage raises fundamental questions about the way in which our relationship with Washington has evolved over the eight years since Howard was elected.

If it is indeed true that Washington would downgrade the alliance as retaliation for Australians making sovereign political decisions, then Australians are justified in questioning the type of relationship that our foreign policy elite has carved out for us. Indeed, it would be a devastating indictment of Australian foreign policy.

Canada is a US ally and has not been targeted by Washington for its reluctance to involve itself in the mire of Iraq. Nor have other prominent US allies, including Japan,

South Korea and most NATO members, whose involvement in Iraq is a relatively recent development.

And yet if Howard, Downer, Bush and Schieffer are to be believed, Australia, despite its unqualified support for Washington's Iraqi misadventure thus far, faces punishment for making sovereign political choices.

It is true that Australia draws enormous benefits from its relationship with the United States, especially in terms of access to intelligence and military technology. But it is far from clear-cut that these benefits justify a policy of submissiveness.

Washington's reluctance to involve itself more fully in East Timor (out of deference to

its own relationship with Jakarta), the meagre offerings in the proposed Australia-US free trade agreement, and a recent announcement that Australia will not be allowed to share fully in the high-end technology being developed for the next generation of US-designed strike fighter aircraft, despite Australian investment in the development stage, are only the most recent examples of where supposed benefits from the Alliance have failed to materialise.

Make no mistake, the US alliance is important for Australia, and for the foreseeable future it must provide the fulcrum upon which our security rests.

Australia's troop commitment to the US-led military operation in Iraq is less than 0.05 per cent of the total allied presence in that country. It has been a small but valuable commitment that has again proven this country's preparedness to back its great and powerful friend. As a result of this commitment, Australians at home and abroad face an elevated risk of terrorist attack. At the very least it is reasonable that Australia's contribution be gratefully acknowledged – which it is – without the threat of retaliation dangling over us – which it is not.

As a community, the current debate over the merits of an ongoing military commitment to Iraq is a sign of a healthy democracy. But threats of a punitive US response undermine the integrity of this debate and compromise the essence of our democracy.

Moreover, the Howard Government's complicity in Washington's bullying behaviour is at odds with its core responsibility to defend both the strategic well-being and political independence of all Australians.

INPRINT



Rebels with a Cause Independents in Australian Politics

By **Brian Costar and Jennifer Curtin**
Published by University of New South Wales Press
RRP: \$16.95

In this comprehensive account of the phenomenon of non-party parliamentarians, the authors draw on new research from regional Australia and look at why independents are gaining support, how they relate to the major parties, and how they exercise power in state and federal parliaments.

Disillusionment with the major parties has led to high-profile, locally admired independents gaining electoral support, especially in rural and regional Australia, with Australia having more independent parliamentarians than any comparable Western country.

Brian Costar is associate professor of politics at Monash University, and Jennifer Curtin is a lecturer in politics at Monash.

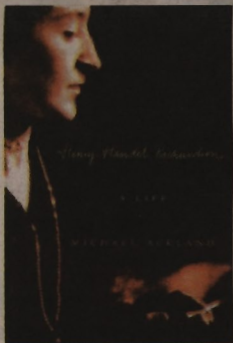
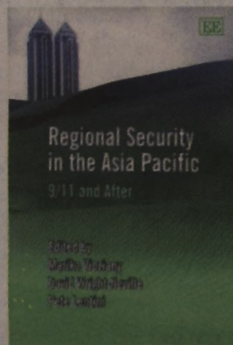
Regional Security in the Asia Pacific 9/11 and After

Edited by **Marika Vicziany, David Wright-Neville and Pete Lentini**
Published by Edward Elgar Publishing
RRP: \$78.95

In this book, Asia specialists from academia and policy think-tanks assess the impact of the September 11 attacks on the Asia Pacific. The contributors consider regional and global security in ways that go beyond the narrow focus on nation-states.

They examine the 'hardware' of security such as weapons of mass destruction, as well as the more fundamental issues of governance, identity, religion, economic collaboration, and the destabilising impact of poverty and disease.

Marika Vicziany is professor and director of the Monash Asia Institute. David Wright-Neville and Pete Lentini are senior lecturers in the Department of Politics and co-convenors of the Global Terrorism Research Unit in the School of Political and Social Inquiry at Monash University.



Henry Handel Richardson A Life

By **Michael Ackland**
Published by Cambridge University Press
RRP: \$59.95

Henry Handel Richardson is celebrated for her novels *The Getting of Wisdom* and *The Fortunes of Richard Mahoney*, yet little is known of the life-story of this enigmatic literary icon.

In this first complete biography of the famous writer, the author draws on previously unavailable records to shed new light on Richardson's unconventional life. Beginning with her traumatic childhood, then tracing in detail the largely unknown story of the 11 formative years Richardson spent in Europe, the book goes on to explore the personal and social forces that moved her during her long years as a London intellectual, concluding with her ordeal as a frail spectator in the front-line of the Battle of Britain.

Michael Ackland is head of the English department at Monash University.

POSTscript

The Lung Development, Aging and the Environment

Edited by **Richard Harding, Kent Pinkerton and Charles Plopper**
Published by Elsevier Academic Press
RRP: \$272.25

This book provides an up-to-date account of the normal processes of human lung development, growth and ageing, followed by a detailed consideration of how environmental factors influence these processes.

It demonstrates how the respiratory system undergoes distinct and unique stages of change throughout its life cycle, starting before birth and continuing through to old age and death.

The Lung also describes genetic factors involved in susceptibility to lung disease and discusses respiratory health risk in children.

Richard Harding is professor of physiology in the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences at Monash University.

If you are a member of the Monash community and have a forthcoming book, contact media@adm.monash.edu.au.

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Showing 'lifeSigns'

A major installation work conceived by multimedia artist and Monash University academic Troy Innocent is on display as part of the 2004: *australian culture now* exhibition at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image.

Mr Innocent's 'lifeSigns' project, some three years in the making, is part of his ongoing investigation of virtual worlds as vehicles for new forms of communication and expression. The work combines elements of digital games, artificial life and electronic language.

Film Victoria's Digital Media Fund provided funding for the project, and a major industry sponsor was Criterion Software, which supplied the Renderware graphics engine to create 'lifeSigns'.

"The 'lifeSigns' world is an interactive installation that combines two separate views of the space and generates iconographic languages," Mr Innocent said. "It explores the idea of emergent language through computational processes, where both human and digital agents contribute to the formation of meaning."

A large projection shows a map of the world accompanied by a generative soundscape. Four workstations placed around the edges of the map enable navigation and play of the world. Each 'living sign' or lifeSign is unique in its visual appearance, motion, sound and response to performance and play by the audience. The lifeSigns, like living creatures, can multiply, evolve, interbreed and die in response to conditions created by visitors interacting with the systems.

"The languages generated by lifeSigns may be made of familiar everyday shapes and forms, or may result in alternative forms indicative of an 'alien logic'. The meaning of this space may also shift on another level. It may be seen as a model for the generation of digital media languages, an abstract world of form and colour, a representation of the cosmos, or a simulation of quantum-scale reality."

Mr Innocent, course coordinator of Monash University's Multimedia



Interactive:
Troy Innocent
with
'lifeSigns'.

Photo:
Greg Ford

and Digital Arts department at Caulfield campus, is an internationally recognised multimedia artist.

Trained as a designer and practising as an artist, he has worked across media in projects involving computer animation, installation art, interactive media, synthetic images and sound. He has exhibited widely at national and international galleries, conferences and symposia.

The underlying theme of his work for the past 15 years has been the exploration of the digital realm.

2004: *australian culture now* is a major collaborative project between the Australian Centre for the Moving Image and the National Gallery of Victoria, showcasing the work of more than 130 leading and

emerging Australian artists. The exhibition surveys contemporary Australian art and history and includes the latest in film, video, television, painting, networked media, sculpture, installation, photography, craft, design and fashion.

— Karen Stichtenoth

Show notes

What: 'lifeSigns: eco-system of signs and symbols, 2003'.

When: Until 12 September.

Where: Australian Centre for the Moving Image, Federation Square, Melbourne.

Who: For more information, email Troy.Innocent@ArtDes.monash.edu.au, telephone +61 3 9903 1910, or visit www.acmi.net.au/2004exhibition.jsp.

Summer love is like no other

The Bell Shakespeare Company's new production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, one of William Shakespeare's funniest and most popular comedies, is being presented by the Monash University Arts Centres this month.

A humorous tale of unrequited love, jealousy, mistaken identity and fairy magic, the play is the latest production to feature in Monash's 2004 Performing Arts program.

A Midsummer Night's Dream begins its Melbourne season at the Alexander Theatre with three evening and two matinee performances scheduled, beginning on 19 July.

Directed by Bell Shakespeare associate artist Ms Anna Volska, the production draws together a youthful cast of great charm and physicality, who transport the audience to a captivating fantasy world.

"These actors can do anything. They can transform themselves into fairies, lovers, even a magical forest," Ms Volska said. "They are acrobats and comedians and deliver a play of poetry and delight."

In the play, Athens is abuzz with arrangements for a royal wedding, but a collision between the fairy and mortal worlds sends magic spells flying and is destined to wreak chaos and confusion.

Deep in an enchanted forest, Oberon and Titania, king and queen of fairyland, are quarrelling. There is also disquiet among the human lovers at the royal court, who become lost in the forest.

The selfish, possessive and obsessive star-crossed lovers get caught up in the marital discord of the king and queen. They are soon entangled in the fairies' mischievous antics, led by Oberon's sprite, Puck.

The merry chase he leads them on, all in the name of love, is upstaged by a team of amateur thespians rehearsing



Sweet dreams on a midsummer's night: Simon Bossell and Georgina Adamson as the lovers Lysander and Hermia.

in the forest. Many trials and tribulations must be overcome before personal relationships can be resolved.

Experience the fun and magic as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* observes the difficulties of love and relationships and reflects the need for harmony in a fractious world. With love, magic and moonlight, the play has something for everyone.

— Karen Stichtenoth

Show notes:

What: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

When: 19 July at 8 pm, 20 and 21 July at 1.30 pm and 8 pm.

Where: Alexander Theatre, Monash University, Clayton campus.

Bookings: Contact the Monash Box Office on +61 3 9905 1111.

Information: Visit www.monash.edu.au/monart/events/midsummer.html.

Invading insects:
Dr Dennis O'Dowd is developing a plan he hopes will reduce the threats introduced ants pose to the Australian environment and economy.

Photo: Greg Ford



Ant attack

In 2001, an innocuous-looking ant was discovered at Fisherman Islands, the site of container facilities at the mouth of the Brisbane River.

Only about 5mm long and reddish-brown in colour, the ant had stung a workman and a sample was sent to the CSIRO.

That sample, and another that had been sent by a gardener to officers at Queensland's Department of Primary Industry, prompted immediate alarm – for the first time, the red imported fire ant had been detected in Australia.

Fire ants breed and spread rapidly and can devastate the environment and agriculture. Elsewhere they have been known to kill frogs, lizards, birds and small mammals. In farming areas, fire ants damage seeds and crops as well as infrastructure such as irrigation equipment.

In Australia, an approximately \$175 million program funded by federal, state and territory governments was established within six months of the fire ant being detected in an attempt to remove it from our shores.

Last year, the red imported fire ant was declared a key threatening process under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. This triggered the need for a threat abatement plan to mitigate the impacts of pest ant species.

That plan is being developed by Dr Dennis O'Dowd, a member of the Australian Centre for Biodiversity and a reader in Monash's School of Biological Sciences, and his team. Rather than focusing solely on red imported fire ants, his brief from the Department of Environment and Heritage is to target several introduced 'tramp ant' species including the yellow crazy ant, tropical fire ant, Argentine ant and big-headed ant.

"All these species have the potential to devastate Australia's threatened species and sensitive biodiversity if left uncontrolled," Dr O'Dowd says.

"A threat abatement plan is a good start. It is clearly in the national interest that a strategy be developed and funded to eradicate or control these notorious ants and to prevent entry in the future."

Dr O'Dowd is currently preparing an issues document on the tramp ants for discussion at a workshop scheduled to be held before the International Congress of Entomology from 15 to 21 August in Brisbane.

"A lot of attention has been directed toward eradicating and controlling weeds. Ants are another group of mega invaders," Dr O'Dowd says. "The imported red fire ant infestations in Brisbane, if they spread, could have extraordinary biodiversity, economic and social consequences. People argue they could change the Australian lifestyle.

"The challenge for us as a country is that tramp ants are insidious invaders. In early stages, they are extremely difficult to detect. Tramp ants are threatening entry to Australia

all the time and, as they are good hitchhikers, their chances of entry are increased.

Alien ant species known as tramp ants are posing severe threats to Australia's environmental, economic and social well-being. With funding from the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust, Monash University's **Dr Dennis O'Dowd** is developing an Australian threat abatement plan for some of the world's worst invasive ants.

"It's a probability thing. Even though quarantine here is among the best in the world, after many attempts at penetrating the Australian border these tramp ants can ultimately succeed."

Once established, eradicating and controlling tramp ants is as difficult as keeping them out. Some of the reasons for this are that they have many queens and low levels of aggression within and between colonies of the one species such that they will exchange worker ants. This means they can rapidly build up to extraordinarily high numbers over large areas and have immense effects on the environment.

Although red imported fire ants were detected in 2001, it is thought they broke through quarantine into Queensland several years before, and on two separate occasions. How they came in is unclear – the ants are native to northern Argentina and southern Brazil but might have come in on agricultural equipment from the US or through some other method.

It is this uncertainty that makes developing a threat abatement plan for tramp ants all the more complex. There are a number of aspects to consider – where the tramp ants are coming from, where they are coming in, what they are coming in on, and how frequently.

Then, when dealing with tramp ants that have already penetrated the border, there are more questions. Where could they potentially distribute within Australia? What effects might they have on native plants and animals and how quickly? Is it feasible to eradicate them or just control them?

"Developing this threat abatement plan is complex as the different tramp ant species are found in diverse regions of Australia, they have varying impacts on the environment, and they each prefer different climates, meaning there can be no single focus of eradication or control plan as each species has the potential to spread to a different part of the country," Dr O'Dowd says.

But despite the challenges, Dr O'Dowd is confident that something can be done to mitigate the social, environmental and economic threats posed by tramp ants.

Already, Queensland's intensive eradication campaign for red imported fire ants has made significant progress. More than 400 people have been applying chemical-laced bait to affected areas. These baits have been distributed by hand, with machine-driven spreaders and aerially. In some areas, it appears 97.5 per cent of fire ants have been killed.

Late in 2002, an aerial baiting campaign of 2500 hectares of yellow crazy ant supercolonies on Christmas Island reduced the ants' activity by 99 per cent. The ants had decimated Christmas Island's world-renowned red crab population and severely damaged the island's ecology.

"Data collected from 50 monitoring stations across the island indicated that the baiting achieved immediate control of all known crazy ant supercolonies. But we don't know yet whether it will effectively control crazy ants in the long term," Dr O'Dowd says.

"These two examples offer promise, but it is unlikely they will be appropriate for controlling or eradicating all tramp ant species. There are no easy answers in all of this. There's the need to weigh up the cost and impact of the control program versus the potential environmental and economic costs of a tramp ant infestation. For example, chemical baits are not only attractive to tramp ants but can also be eaten by some native invertebrates, causing non-target impacts.

"For a lot of these invasions, it might be much more economic and effective to act straightaway, in the absence of full scientific knowledge" he says. "While we might prefer to gather all knowledge on the possible impacts of these ants and their control before acting, by then it may be too late."

– Penny Fannin

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ORIGIN OF FIVE SPECIES

Argentine ant

First arrived: 1939

Introduction: unintentional

How: unknown

Distributed:

Victoria, Tasmania, Western Australia, New South Wales

Native to: South America



Red imported fire ant

First arrived: 2001

Introduction: unintentional

How: unknown

Distributed: Brisbane, Queensland

Native to: South America

Big-headed ant

First arrived: pre-1900

Introduction: unintentional

How: unknown

Distributed:

Northern Territory, south-eastern and south-western Australia

Native to: southern Africa



Yellow crazy ant

First arrived: pre-1934

Introduction: unintentional

How: unknown

Distributed: Brisbane, Cairns, Northern Territory, Christmas Island

Native to: unknown – possibly Africa, India or China

Tropical fire ant

First arrived: unknown

Introduction: unintentional

How: unknown

Distributed:

Queensland, Northern Territory

Native to:

Central America through to the southern United States



Photos: Japanese Ant Database

Call for independent body to fight police corruption

Criminology

A new independent body to tackle police corruption and organised crime in Victoria should be established, participants in a recent Monash-led seminar have concluded.

The participants – Law faculty dean Professor Arie Freiberg, Monash criminal justice and criminology head Associate Professor Colleen Lewis, Law Institute of Victoria (LIV) president Mr Chris Dale, Victorian Criminal Bar Association chairman Mr Lex Lasry QC and shadow attorney-general Mr Andrew McIntosh – said that recent government proposals to fight the problems had been developed 'on the run'.

They resolved to establish a working party of representatives from the legal community and academia, as well as professionals within the criminal justice system and members of the wider community, to develop a model of a crime and corruption-fighting body. The model will be presented to the Victorian Government as soon as possible.

Professor Freiberg criticised recent changes to the criminal justice system



Two heads call for one body: Monash criminal justice and criminology head, Associate Professor Colleen Lewis, and Law dean Professor Arie Freiberg call for an independent body to tackle police corruption and organised crime in Victoria.

Photo: Melissa Di Ciero

is, in effect, not a law enforcement body in the same way that agencies in other states are who have been given these powers."

He said the level of debate in Victoria regarding whether to establish a crime commission was not

acceptable. "The debate has been carried out on radio and TV and in the newspapers, but not in any formal forums where the issues can be explored in some detail.

"Our seminar brought together some of the leading participants in the debate. It is an attempt to take a measured approach to very important institutional issues that will affect the structure of our criminal justice for some time to come."

– Robyn Anns

that had been implemented without any consultation. "Significant developments include the announcement that the Federal Government will create a new body to investigate corruption in Commonwealth organisations. It is significant that this function, these powers, were not given to the Commonwealth ombudsman even though his office has the power to investigate complaints against the federal police," he said.

"It is also significant that the Federal Government has refused to give the state ombudsman phone-tapping powers because he

is, in effect, not a law enforcement body in the same way that agencies in other states are who have been given these powers."

– Robyn Anns

Contact: arie.freiberg@law.monash.edu.au

Tots, seniors still at high risk of burns and scalds

Injury prevention

Elderly people and children aged under four are the most at-risk groups in the community when it comes to serious burns and scalds, a Monash University Accident Research Centre report has found.

The latest edition of *Hazard*, published by MUARC's Victorian Injury Surveillance and Applied Research Unit, reveals that 15 elderly people died and more than 400 were treated for burns and scalds in Victorian hospitals between 2001 and 2003.

More than 1700 young children were treated during the same period.

Senior researcher Ms Erin Cassell said although burns and scalds in the very young and very old had decreased in recent years, more work was needed to further protect the most vulnerable members of the community.

"Burns and scalds are among the most distressing injuries a child can receive," Ms Cassell said. "Although rarely fatal in children, they can cause considerable pain, need prolonged treatment and result in lifelong disfigurement.

"Elderly burns patients are more likely to suffer serious injuries or die,

though the combination of frailty and late admissions could partly explain this trend."

More than 70 per cent of burns and scalds to young children occurred in the home from hot tea and coffee or other hot fluids (usually heated water, not tap water), the report found.

Scalds among the elderly were mainly from hot fluids (usually boiling water), hot drinks and running hot water, such as during a shower. Eight of the 15 deaths were caused by smoke, fire or flames, while the other seven were from scalds from hot fluids.

The report recommended burn and scald prevention education and media campaigns, including appropriate first aid.

"Burns and scalds are among the most costly of non-fatal injuries in terms of ongoing medical care and rehabilitation and psychological costs," Ms Cassell said. "We need to combine education, publicity, regulation and enforcement, incentives and safety design innovations."

– Allison Harding

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Electricity privatisation fears unfounded

Privatisation

Despite dire predictions of lower service quality and higher prices, the restructure of Victoria's electricity supply industry has largely benefited consumers, Professor Graeme Hodge, director of the Law faculty's Centre for the Study of Privatisation and Public Accountability, has said.

Following an official launch of the book *Power Progress: An Audit of Australia's Electricity Reform Experiment*, Professor Hodge said radical privatisation and regulatory reforms in Victoria had improved the quality of power supplies, despite concerns to the contrary.

The book, which reviewed the past decade of reform to the Australian electricity supply industry, was edited

by Professor Hodge and a team from Monash and Swinburne universities, including fellow Monash Law faculty academic Ms Valarie Sands.

"I suspect we are now better off having restructured," he said. "But we ought to remember that both privatisation and competition reforms have been highly controversial policy arenas that have attracted advocates and critics whose enthusiasm borders on the religious."

Professor Hodge said he had no doubt the 1998 establishment of a National Electricity Market (NEM) had been the right thing to do in terms of the effectiveness of electricity industry reforms.

The NEM aims to promote competition at each stage of the electricity production and supply chain, and provides electricity to about

7.7 million customers in Queensland, New South Wales, the ACT, Victoria and South Australia.

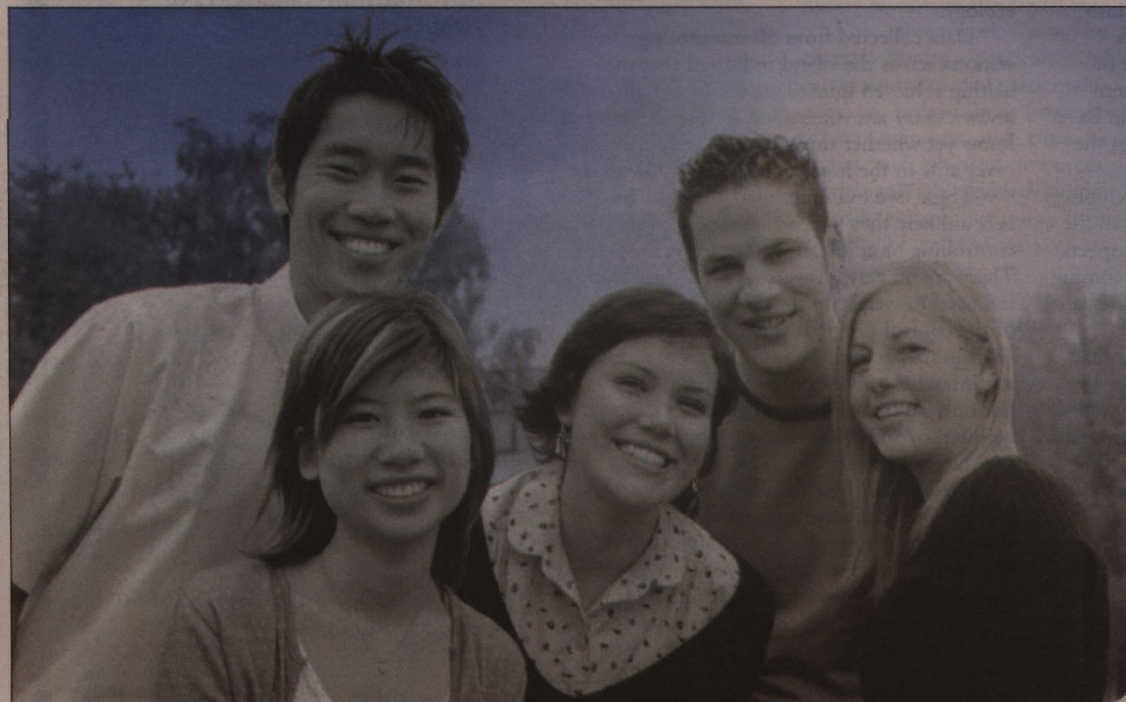
Professor Hodge said the majority of consumers had done well in terms of price decreases, with consumers in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne scoring real price decreases of 47, 43 and 6 per cent respectively since market reregulation. However, electricity prices in Canberra and Adelaide had risen by 60 per cent and 63 per cent respectively, he said.

In cities that were not part of the NEM, price changes had been disparate, with Perth enjoying a 45 per cent decrease in electricity charges and Hobart experiencing a 163 per cent rise.

– Robyn Anns

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