



## It is an honour and a privilege, says Professor Richard Larkins VC handover will be smooth

### APPOINTMENT

Monash University's current and incoming vice-chancellors, Professor Peter Darvall and Professor Richard Larkins AO, will meet over the coming months to ensure a smooth transition of the university's leadership.

Monash announced last month that Professor Larkins would succeed Professor Darvall as vice-chancellor. He will take up his appointment on 1 September this year.

Professor Darvall, who will retire in September, said he looked forward to welcoming Professor Larkins to Monash.

"Professor Larkins and I share a commitment to the ongoing quality teaching and research at the university, and we are determined that Monash will not miss a beat during this handover period," Professor Darvall said.



**Looking forward:** Professor Richard Larkins AO, left, and Professor Peter Darvall.

"This is an extremely exciting time for the university, with the development of the National Stem Cell Centre, a \$300 million Science Technology Research and Innovation Precinct and Australia's first synchrotron."

Professor Larkins described Monash as a

great university, with outstanding scholars and scientists and a rich and diverse student body.

"It is an honour and a privilege to be asked to be its vice-chancellor. I am looking forward immensely to getting to know the staff and students and moving Monash into its next phase of development," he said.

Professor Larkins has been dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences at the University of Melbourne since 1998 and has had a distinguished career in scientific research and academic management.

He was chair of the National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia from 1997 to 2000, president of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians from 2000 to 2002, a member of the Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council from 1997 to 2000 and a member of the National

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Council from 1997 to 2000. He was appointed an Officer in the General Division of the Order of Australia in 2002.

Monash chancellor Mr Jerry Ellis said Professor Larkins would continue the significant advances in research and teaching that Monash was making in its substantial operations in Victoria and around the globe.

"Monash has set a determined path to be one of the world's leading universities," Mr Ellis said.

"With the appointment of an academic leader of the calibre of Professor Larkins, Monash can be assured that it will remain focused on innovation, internationalisation and engagement well into the future."

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## Daily grind wears down koalas' sex lives

### BIOLOGICAL SCIENCE

The older a male koala gets, the more time he spends feeding and the less time he has for social activities such as mating, Monash University researchers have found.

PhD researcher Mr Murray Logan, from the School of Biological Sciences, says this drop in amorous behaviour is a reflection on the state of male koalas' teeth. Koala teeth wear down as a result of their grinding eucalyptus leaves – their primary source of food. Biologists use a koala's tooth wear as an indicator of its age.

"We wanted to know, as the koalas' teeth wore down, how their feeding was affected," Mr Logan said. "We looked at how long they spent feeding

and whether they ate more or chewed more with each mouthful."

In collaboration with Professor Gordon Sanson, head of Monash's School of Biological Sciences, Mr Logan found that the more worn a male koala's teeth were, the longer it needed to spend feeding each day.

The research has been published in the *Australian Journal of Zoology*.

"Koalas sleep or rest 20 hours a day. Those with more worn-down teeth have to spend twice as long feeding – four to five hours rather than 2.5 hours – to extract enough energy from their food," Mr Logan said. "So there's not much time for them to do anything else if they're to get their rest as well."

Mr Logan studied six male koalas, all with the same weight and body

condition, on Raymond Island off the Victorian coast. The only apparent difference between the animals was their degree of tooth wear. Two koalas had a low degree, two had a medium degree and two had a high degree of wear.

Mr Logan fitted radio collars with microphones to each koala, which allowed him to follow each animal as it moved from tree to tree, observing it from a distance and recording how much time it spent bellowing – one of the ways male koalas exert their social dominance: and advertise their position to receptive females.

"The more bellowing a male does, the more dominant he is and the more likely he is to mate," Mr Logan said.

He found that koalas with low and high-tooth wear spent only

two to three minutes of every 24 hours bellowing, whereas those with medium-tooth wear spent 25 minutes. Koalas with low-tooth wear have not reached sexual maturity.

"Koalas with more worn teeth were spending more time feeding and less time being social. These koalas also moved less so had smaller home ranges, and they spent less time on the main social behaviours such as scent marking and bellowing," Mr Logan said.

"In that sense, their teeth defined their reproductive life span."

– Penny Fannin

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## 'Sword and sandal' epics spark fresh academic interest

### CLASSICAL STUDIES

Popular culture has sparked a renewed interest in classical studies, including Latin and Ancient Greek, among students at Monash University.

Films such as *Gladiator* and *Lord of the Rings*, television series including 'Charmed' and 'Buffy the Vampire Slayer' and the Harry Potter books explore many of the themes present in ancient literature, according to assistant lecturer in classical studies at Monash Ms Annabel Orchard.

Ms Orchard said an upcoming film on Alexander the Great, starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Nicole Kidman, and a film set during the Trojan War starring Brad Pitt would help maintain this new-found interest.

This year, Monash's Faculty of Arts is offering a new classical studies major, with enrolments of more than 140 first-year students. A significant number of students are studying Latin and Greek as well as Ancient Greek Theatre, and there is also a summer school in Latin for beginners.

"At the moment, there is a global interest in classical studies, and I think that can be attributed largely to popular culture – to books, 'sword and sandal' films and television shows that have a mythological or fantasy basis," Ms Orchard said. "Students are discovering that delving into cultures of Ancient Greece and Rome helps them to understand the foundations of their own culture and to find out what's changed in 3000 years – and what hasn't."

Ms Orchard said there was also a growing interest in the 'mythologising' of Australian icons such as bushranger Ned Kelly and cricketer Sir Don Bradman, as well as in the ANZAC legend. "Those areas of interest will also be bolstered by popular culture – for example the new Ned Kelly movie with Heath Ledger in the title role," she said.

– Allison Harding

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## South African campus welcomes new students



Monash South Africa entered its third year by welcoming a group of about 200 new students.

Orientation 2003, held over four days in February, aimed to familiarise new students with the campus and give them the chance to meet staff and other students.

Students attended faculty information sessions and took part in physical activities such as wall-climbing and basketball challenges.

A highlight was the Jembe drum workshop, which has become an Orientation tradition at the South Africa campus.

## Premier launches centre for business management

### MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

Management education at Monash University received a boost when Victorian Premier Steve Bracks launched a new research and graduate centre at the Caulfield campus recently.

The MBA (Master of Business Administration) and DBA (Doctor of Business Administration) Centre boasts an innovative study program that draws on diverse fields at the university including law, medicine, finance, IT and pharmacy.

Mr Bracks said the centre would enhance Victoria's status as the education hub of Australia and highlighted the crucial role that Victoria's universities played in driving the state's economic future.

He said Victoria needed highly skilled managers to maximise the impact of government-funded research and development. "The opening of the MBA and DBA Centre here at Monash is a major step in achieving this. It is also a major milestone for a university which boasts an MBA program that consistently ranks in the world's top 100," he said.

Business and Economics dean Professor Gill Palmer said the centre



**Major milestone:** Victorian Premier Mr Steve Bracks and Monash Business and Economics dean Professor Gill Palmer at the launch.

would become the hub of a new model of university-wide executive education that could provide both professional and technical development and high-level management skills.

"The establishment of the centre is an exciting new phase in the development of executive management research and education at Monash,"

she said. "In contrast to the traditional business school model, Monash MBA and DBA students will have the distinct advantage of being able to draw on the diversity, strengths and academic resources across the entire university."

"Monash has a distinguished history in management education, and its strength has been its expertise in the fundamentals of the world of business and commerce. We are now able to offer a learning experience with expertise from a much broader field of studies."

Monash University and its Faculty of Business and Economics have invested more than \$2 million in building developments for the new educational facility.

The Monash DBA is a research degree equivalent to a PhD, specifically aimed at experienced managers wishing to enhance their knowledge and skills in applied research on a part-time basis.

A feature of the Monash MBA is its ability to offer specialisations and professional tracks across faculties in areas such as corporate finance, information technology, international business, pharmacy, health care, multimedia and law. Double masters degrees are also available with the MBA.

– Robyn Anns

## Monash takes key role in school of government

Monash University is playing a pivotal role in a new national school of government that will offer high-level courses designed for the next generation of public sector leaders.

The Australia and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG) is an initiative of the governments of Australia, New Zealand, Victoria, NSW and Queensland, as well as 11 universities including Monash.

The school, located in Parkville, Melbourne, will offer masters-level programs in public administration and specialised programs in policy and management in the public, government-related and not-for-profit sectors. Classes are due to begin in May this year.

Retiring chairman of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission

and honorary professor in Monash's Faculty of Business and Economics Professor Allan Fels has been appointed as ANZSOG's foundation dean.

Former head of Monash's Department of Management Professor Owen Hughes has been appointed ANZSOG's academic director, while Business and Economics dean Professor Gill Palmer has been named one of 12 directors on the foundation board.

Professor Hughes, who is on a three-year secondment to ANZSOG, said the school's academic programs would equal those of flagship schools of government such as the Kennedy School at Harvard University.

– Allison Harding

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### IN BRIEF

#### Monash student wins synchrotron fellowship

Monash PhD graduate Dr Karen Siu is one of six Australian PhD students to have been awarded an Australian Synchrotron Research Program Fellowship.

The fellowship will allow Dr Siu, a researcher in the School of Physics and Materials Engineering, to access overseas synchrotron facilities.

Australia's first synchrotron, to be built at Monash, is expected to be operational in 2007.

In collaboration with Professor Rob Lewis, Monash's professor of x-ray and synchrotron physics, Dr Siu will carry out synchrotron radiation studies of brain tissue to reveal structural differences between malignant and non-malignant brain tissue.

#### New appointment to honour Australian icon

The courage and dedication of World War II nurse Sister Vivian Bullwinkel has been recognised with the appointment of the inaugural Vivian Bullwinkel professor of nursing (palliative care) on the Peninsula campus. Professor Margaret O'Connor, formerly of La Trobe University, took up her position last month.

The innovative research and teaching position has been established by Monash's School of Nursing in partnership with the Peninsula Hospice Service, the Royal District Nursing Service and Peninsula Health. Professor O'Connor said the position was significant for the development of palliative care in Australia.

School of Nursing head Associate Professor Tony Barnett said the position was developed with the late Sister Bullwinkel's philosophies in mind.

"By all accounts, Sister Bullwinkel was as much a humanitarian as a nurse," he said.

#### Monash links with Tsinghua University

As part of its drive to foster links with Chinese academic institutions, Monash has entered a special arrangement with Tsinghua University that will see the two institutions deliver postgraduate degree programs at each other's campuses. The agreement was signed at a ceremony at Monash last month.

Monash vice-chancellor Professor Peter Darvall said the two universities would initially aim to develop the joint delivery of postgraduate degree programs, which in turn would strengthen Monash-Tsinghua academic cooperation as well as links between China and Australia.

Tsinghua is well known for its academic strengths in the fields of art and design, engineering, sciences, and business and public management.

#### Online learning for the workplace

Monash University and a Melbourne multimedia design company have produced an innovative e-learning product that delivers a virtual lecture into the workplace.

Monash World CLASS (Cyber Learning and Student Space) is a joint venture between the university and Big Time Media, in which course material is adapted for the corporate and consumer market and supported by an interactive games-style platform.

Students in the workplace can access the course materials using CD-ROM and the internet.

Student Accommodation Available

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# Smart cars aim to cut accidents

## TRANSPORT SYSTEMS

The latest intelligence systems in cars will be tested by the Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC) in what is the first study in the world to assess the effects of such systems on driving performance.

Fifteen Ford passenger cars have been fitted with the Intelligent Transport Systems, designed to improve safety and reduce road accidents across the state.

The systems include:

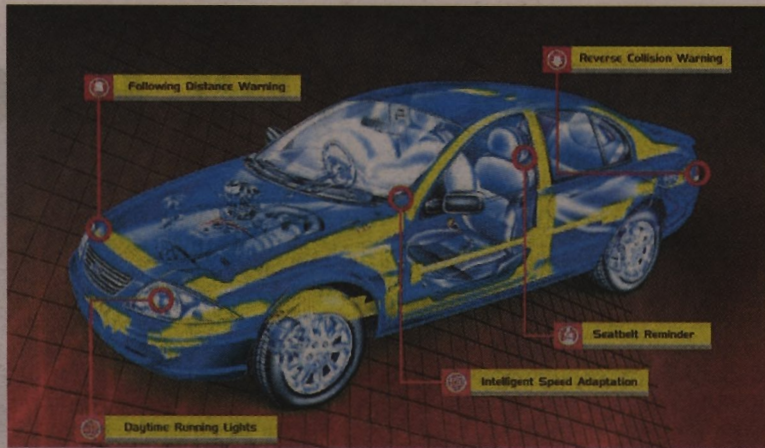
- the automatic illumination of headlights to 80 per cent of normal intensity as soon as the ignition is started;

- a radar to assess the speed and proximity of objects in front of the vehicle, alerting drivers if they are too close to the vehicle in front of them;

- a seatbelt reminder system that issues both visual and spoken warning signals with increased intensity if any occupant is not wearing a seatbelt;

- an in-vehicle digital map of speed limits on all streets in Melbourne and major satellite cities which, in conjunction with global positioning, warns drivers via a visual display and upward pressure on the accelerator pedal if they are speeding;

- a sonar proximity sensor in the bumper that warns if the reversing car



is about to hit other objects, including pedestrians.

The Safecar project will assess whether cars fitted with these systems make people drive more safely during and after using them. It will also measure the acceptability of such systems to drivers.

It will monitor the driving behaviour

of 30 drivers. Each participant will drive one of the 15 cars over 17,000 kilometres and will fill in questionnaires on the effectiveness of the systems. As well, the cars have been fitted with a microchip to automatically log driver behaviour.

MUARC senior research fellow Dr Michael Regan said research indicated that the systems, which were designed to

support drivers, not take control of the car away from them, had the potential to reduce the risk of death on Victorian roads by up to 30 per cent.

He said speeding was implicated in about 20 per cent of all accidents and the intelligent speed adaptation device alone could reduce accidents in Victoria resulting in injury by more than 10 per cent, saving about \$155 million a year, assuming that around 70 per cent of drivers across the state used the system.

The Safecar project is an initiative of MUARC, the Transport Accident Commission (TAC) and Ford Australia.

- Diane Squires

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# Study finds lasting effect of 1991 Gulf stress

## HEALTH

The first comprehensive health study of Australia's 1991 Gulf War veterans has found they are more likely to develop psychological disorders than members of the Australian Defence Force who had not been deployed there.

More than 80 per cent of the 1871 veterans took part in the three-year study, undertaken by researchers from Monash University's Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine in collaboration with Health Services Australia, the University of Western Australia and the Australian Centre for Post-traumatic Mental Health.

As well as the increased risk of psychological disorders to veterans, the study found they were more likely to self-report medical conditions such as back and joint problems, skin disorders, fatigue and neurological, respiratory and other symptoms.

However, several objective measures of physical health, such as blood, liver and kidney tests, lung function testing and a test of fatiguability, did not show any increased health risks for Gulf War veterans. Cancer and mortality rates were not elevated, and they were no more likely to have adverse pregnancy outcomes.

Associate Professor Malcolm Sim, head of occupational and environmental health research at Monash, led the study, which was commissioned by the Department of Veterans' Affairs and overseen by a Scientific Advisory Committee.

"There was concern that some of the exposures and experiences unique to the Gulf War, such as the possible exposure to depleted uranium, chemical or biological weapons, anti-biological warfare medications, or smoke and oil from burning oil wells, may have resulted in health problems among Australian Gulf War veterans," Professor Sim said. "But the study's most striking and consistent health finding was that they had developed more psychological disorders than the comparison group in the time since the Gulf War."

"The highest increase in risk was for post-traumatic stress disorder, but veterans also more commonly demonstrated other anxiety disorders, depression and substance use disorders including problem drinking."

"These psychological disorders were strongly associated with recall of psychological stressors during the Gulf War, such as being in fear of death or injury, under threat of biological or chemical attack and being in a hostile environment."

- Penny Fannin

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New depths: A protein in blue coral could become an important biotechnological tool.

Photo: AAP

# Coral takes on a brighter hue

## BIOCHEMISTRY

The protein that gives reef-building corals their blue colour could have significant biotechnological uses such as highlighting structures or monitoring protein interactions within cells, Monash University researchers have found.

Corals are renowned for their vivid and diverse colours, and the proteins that are responsible for these myriad colours are called pocilloporins.

Many pocilloporins are fluorescent, but scientists from Monash's Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology have found that the blue coral protein, which is not fluorescent, can be manipulated to fluoresce under certain conditions.

Research fellow Dr Mark Prescott, senior research fellow Dr Jamie Rossjohn and Associate Professor Rod Devenish solved the protein's structure recently in the School of Biomedical Sciences Protein Crystallography Unit and believe the protein, which is itself a brilliant blue, could become an important biotechnological tool.

Their findings were published in the international journal *Structure* in March.

Fluorescent proteins can be of immense use to scientists, as they can be used as the basis for biological probes that allow them to track crucial interactions within and between mammalian cells.

Marine biologists from the University of Queensland's Centre for Marine Studies Dr Sophie Dove and Professor Ove Hoegh-Guldberg originally extracted the blue protein from a coral called *Montipora efflorescens* found on the Great Barrier Reef.

In collaboration with the UQ team, Dr Prescott was keen to investigate the protein's potential as a fluorescent probe, as it was

biochemically similar to the green fluorescent proteins found in jellyfish and a red fluorescent protein from *Discosoma* coral called DsRed. Both proteins are used as biological probes to track the movements of molecules within cells.

"We were interested in finding new proteins that were red fluorescent but did not have the disadvantages of existing probes," Dr Prescott said. "Proteins can fluoresce across the visible light spectrum, and we had been looking for proteins that emitted light further into the red part of the spectrum. Light emitted from such proteins is not as easily absorbed by mammalian tissue and is easier to detect."

The blue coral protein was a good contender as it had similar structure and biochemistry to the fluorescent green and DsRed proteins. However, it did not fluoresce.

"We think the reason this protein is non-fluorescent is because it has a unique orientation of its chromophore - the structure that absorbs light - that has not been seen before in any other protein," Dr Prescott said. "We have found we can manipulate the protein to make it fluoresce a deep red colour."

The protein is already being used as a fluorescent probe by scientists within Monash to monitor proteins in cells.

"Further investigation of this protein will give us the opportunity to design and make better probes that can fluoresce further into the red," said Dr Prescott. "Its unique properties could make it an extremely useful scientific tool."

- Penny Fannin

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# Pioneer students help promote the delights of Estonia

## TOURISM

Masters students from Monash University's Graduate Tourism Program are assisting the former Soviet republic of Estonia to market itself to the world as a tourist destination.

Master of Tourism candidate Mr Thomas Redmond is the first student to visit the country as part of an innovative internship agreement between the Estonian Tourism Board and the Graduate Tourism Program in Monash's National Centre for Australian Studies.

Estonia, located just south of Finland and sharing borders with Russia and Latvia, became effectively closed to the west after World War II. The country remained behind the Iron Curtain until the early 1990s, when the Soviet Union collapsed. Estonia's capital city of Tallinn, recently given World Heritage listing by UNESCO, was originally created as a trading port in the 13th century.

Director of the Graduate Tourism Program and independent traveller research specialist Mr Jeff Jarvis said Estonia was now in "a catch-up phase" and was trying to attract its share of the global tourist market.

"Estonia has enormous potential - it is one of the world's best kept tourism secrets," he said. "Currently, it is only known to the Finns and Scandinavians, primarily as a duty-free shopping destination."

"Monash is providing an insight into how Australia has structured its tourism industry and focused on specific high-yield segments such as convention delegates and backpackers."

Deputy director of the Monash program and tourism development research specialist Dr Victoria Peel believes Estonia needs to strategically alter the focus of its tourism industry, despite a massive increase in visitors from 175,500 in 1985 to 3.2 million in 2001. "Over the next few years, we hope to help the Estonian Tourism Board target visitors who will spend longer and travel further in the country," she said.

As well as researching the independent traveller market, Mr Redmond is working with Estonia's museums on product development for the tourist market.

"We aim to ensure that every avenue for tourism is explored by tapping into Monash's considerable expertise in the area of tourism research, built up through the National Centre of Australian Studies over the past decade," Mr Jarvis said.

- Diane Squires

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# Building post-Soviet knowledge

## EDUCATION

Monash University's Faculty of Education is helping rebuild the education system in the former Soviet republic of Kazakhstan.

Academics Professor Terri Seddon, Professor Sue Willis, Associate Professor Tony Townsend and Ms Marilyn Flear are working with Soros-Kazakhstan and the Kazakhstan Department of Education on several projects designed to improve the education system.

The projects are being funded by the Soros Foundation, which is

involved in a range of programs assisting new democracies around the world. Kazakhstan, which borders China and Russia, became a Soviet republic in 1936. It gained its independence in 1991 when the USSR disbanded.

Until now, the country, which is still going through a process of democratisation, has had a Russian system of education. Monash was asked in late 2001 to help develop Kazakhstan's national curriculum framework, from early childhood through to the end of high school.

Professor Willis, who is also dean of the faculty, said the curriculum

was intended to be outcome-based – a system that establishes desired outcomes and then designs the curriculum to achieve those outcomes.

"Australia has been very progressive in developing outcome-based curricula, and Monash is recognised as a leader in this field," she said. "Kazakhstan has been interested in developing this kind of education system and so approached us to assist them."

Monash will also help Kazakhstan universities extend their teaching programs and establish masters programs in their education faculties.

Professor Willis said the initial idea was for Monash to provide masters programs in Kazakhstan, but the faculty agreed it was better to work in partnership with the local universities and help them establish their own programs.

The Kazakhstan government has also expressed interest in Monash working with its universities on research projects.

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# Mammal-like reptile springs a surprise

## GEOSCIENCE



A clumsy-looking animal that resembled a hippopotamus but had a strong horny beak like a turtle and a pair of tusk-like teeth has been identified by Monash University scientists as surviving a mass extinction event that occurred about 200 million years ago.

Dr Tony Thulborn and Dr Susan Turner, honorary research associates in Monash University's School of Geosciences, have found that dicynodonts – mammal-like reptiles that dominated the Earth before the rise of the dinosaurs – survived for more than 100 million years after their supposed extinction between 222 and 215 million years ago, and well beyond the mass extinction 200 million years ago that wiped out much of the world's species of animals.

Their findings were published last month in the *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London, Series B (Biological Sciences)*.

Dr Thulborn and Dr Turner have identified a fossil specimen, stored in the Queensland Museum for almost 90 years, as a dicynodont that lived 105 million years ago.

The specimen, comprising six fragments of fossil bone, was found in 1914 by Queensland parliamentarian Frederick L. Berney and landowner Robert Pool. They were collected from

rocks near the town of Hughenden, in central Queensland.

The fragments are all from the left facial region of a single skull. "We estimate that the intact skull would have been about 40 centimetres long," Dr Thulborn said. "The whole animal might have been about two metres long."

Although it was unexpected to find dicynodonts in rocks 105 million years old, Dr Thulborn said he and Dr Turner were sure of the identification.

"Every anatomical feature in the specimen is found in dicynodonts; there isn't a single exception," he said. "Some of the features are found only in dicynodonts – the characteristic tusk, with its unique internal structure of nested cones, and parts of the jaw margin and palate showing the areas of attachment for the horny beak. Conversely, we can't find even a single feature that would identify the fragments as something other than a dicynodont."

"This discovery more than doubles the known duration of dicynodont history. Previously, dicynodonts were known to have survived for about 63 million years. We now know that they survived very much longer – at least 170 million years – and became extinct much more recently, about 105 million years ago, or even later."

Dr Turner and Dr Thulborn will search for more dicynodonts on an expedition to central Queensland this Easter.

– Penny Fannin

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Mr Paul Wellington looks over a vehicle designed by students from Box Hill High School, from left, Alex Thompson, Ross Perry and Alex McQueen.  
Photo: Peter Anikijenko

# Solar vehicles shine in show

## ENGINEERING

Race-winning model solar boats and cars from last year's Model Solar Vehicle Challenge are on display in Melbourne, offering inspiration to the hundreds of Victorian school students who have started building the vehicles they will enter in this year's challenge.

The challenge, organised by Monash University's Faculty of Engineering and Melbourne's ScienceWorks museum, will be held at ScienceWorks in October. Last year's challenge attracted 300 entries – 100 cars and 200 boats.

Four model solar cars and six model solar boats are on display at the Centre for Innovation and Technology Commercialisation at 257 Collins Street, Melbourne. The exhibition will run until 14 April.

Mr Paul Wellington, chair of the Monash Engineering Model Solar Vehicle Challenge Committee,

said the exhibition would also feature the first public display of a dynamometer, a device built by staff from Monash's Faculty of Engineering to measure the performance of model solar cars.

"With a dynamometer, the back wheels of a model car sit on a drum. When you switch a light on above the car, the back wheels move and you can work out how far it will go with that amount of light," Mr Wellington said. "You can also simulate changes in light intensity and see how that affects the car's performance."

After featuring in the exhibition, the dynamometer will be displayed at the Monash Science Centre on the university's Clayton campus.

– Penny Fannin

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## SCHOOLS

### Explore Monash Gippsland

Tuesday 15 April, 2 pm to 5 pm

Students interested in courses taught at the Gippsland campus may not get the chance to visit the campus on Open Day.

This year, Monash is running Explore Monash Gippsland sessions during the school holidays, so students and their families can visit the campus during the Easter school holiday break.

Families will be given a personal tour of the campus and student residences and will be able to select academic areas of interest to be included on the tour. They will also have the opportunity to ask questions of staff and current students.

Bookings are required for these sessions. For more information, contact Ms Sharon Foster, on +61 3 9902 6594 or +61 3 5122 6594.

### VCE seminar – Gippsland campus

Tuesday 15 April, 9 am to 1 pm

Motivational speaker Steven McInnes will be offering a free, hands-on seminar to help students develop the skills they need to deal with VCE challenges. Places are limited, so early registration is recommended.

For more information, contact Ms Sharon Foster on +61 3 9902 6594 or +61 3 5122 6594.

### New courses 2004

#### Bachelor of Creative Arts – Caulfield and Gippsland

Students of this three-year degree will be introduced to the practical and theoretical aspects of creative arts. The degree has been specifically designed for people who may not have a design portfolio but can demonstrate a strong interest in the area of creative arts. Students will study a number of areas including visual arts, design and digital art.

For more information, contact +61 3 9903 2707 or email [design@artdes.monash.edu.au](mailto:design@artdes.monash.edu.au).

#### Bachelor of Environmental Technology – Gippsland

This three-year degree will prepare students to be environmental problem-solvers through training in the relevant sciences and technologies. Study areas will include chemistry, cell biology, environmental technology and physical science.

For more information, contact +61 3 9902 6431 or email [scienceinquiries@monash.edu.au](mailto:scienceinquiries@monash.edu.au).

#### Bachelor of Nursing/Bachelor of Rural Health – Gippsland

This four-year double degree aims to prepare students for a career in rural nursing practice. It is identical to the Bachelor of Nursing during the first two years, after which it focuses on rural practice. Studies include counselling, rural health issues, Indigenous studies and multidisciplinary care.

For more information, contact +61 3 9902 6454 or email [nursing.enquiries@med.monash.edu.au](mailto:nursing.enquiries@med.monash.edu.au).

#### Bachelor of Science Advanced (Honours) – Clayton

This four-year course is an advanced form of the Bachelor of Science, with a stronger entry requirement. Graduates complete either two majors or a double major in science. Research studies are an integral feature of the course, commencing at undergraduate level and including a full year of honours studies.

For more information, contact +61 3 9905 4604 or email [enquiries@sci.monash.edu.au](mailto:enquiries@sci.monash.edu.au).

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How the people of Southeast Asia interpret the war in Iraq – and Australia’s involvement in it – may greatly influence the prospects for stability and good relations in the region for some years to come, argues Monash academic **Mr Paul Thomas**.

Australia’s northern neighbours are rapidly growing concerned about reports coming from the war in Iraq. There appears little support for the war – on the streets, in government circles, or in the media.

While the Filipino government has been included in the ‘Coalition of the Willing’ and Singapore’s government has given somewhat subdued support to the American stance, these positions are not necessarily a reflection of public opinion in their respective countries. Singapore has had to be sensitive towards its two large neighbours and its own Muslim minority, while the Philippines has been concerned about ASEAN unity and the possibility of increased support for Muslim insurgencies in its south.

In Indonesia and Malaysia, there has been more congruity between the opinions of government and the public. Indonesia has strongly condemned America’s decision to go into Iraq, and it has undertaken a number of diplomatic initiatives designed to demonstrate its opposition. In Malaysia, the criticism has been even more strident, with the Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir Mohamad, issuing what seem like daily statements condemning the war.

Underpinning this substantial opposition to the war are myriad concerns: the danger of a downturn in the world economy; the collapse of the United Nations as the ultimate arbitrator in world conflicts; the consequences of an unrestrained and capricious US; the potential for expansion of the conflict into other countries; fear of substantial civilian casualties; and, perhaps more specific to the region, perceptions by Muslims that this is a war against Islam, or at the very least influenced by paranoia towards Islam by the West.

The war in Iraq is, therefore, not seen in terms of the nature or history of Saddam Hussein’s regime but in terms of the possible consequences of the war – a war both the Indonesian and Malaysian governments believe to be unjust and illegal.

So how does the Australian government’s position of total and unquestioned support for the US actions in Iraq sit within this regional context? And does it matter?

In the eyes of most Southeast Asian nations, Australia remains a Western country. Therefore, to a large extent, there was not a great deal of surprise that Australia would support the US position. However, among the political leaders of Southeast Asia, the unswerving nature of the support and the deployment of military troops into Iraq have raised many concerns.



*“The danger is that the voice of the moderates may be diminished as the more extreme elements promote the view that America’s hegemony is an attempt to impose the will of a superpower over the will of Allah.”*

Photo: AAP

that Australia’s relations with its neighbours, or at least the governments of those countries, are holding up. No country in the region has seriously threatened to break diplomatic ties, cut or downgrade cooperation in the fight against terrorism, reduce trade, or cut education links. However, we have started to erode a great deal of the goodwill and empathy we had received from the region post Bali bombings. Australia had

been capitalising on this understanding in its pursuit for a more secure and stable region. Any belief that the cooperation we have received to date is not at risk is simply delusional.

For Australia and its relationship with Southeast Asia, the war in Iraq has to

be seen as a high-risk strategy. If the emphasis remains on regime change and on the imposition of a Western political system in Iraq under an American-appointed administration, it will heighten opposition to the war throughout the Arab and Malay Muslim world. The danger is that the voice of the moderates may be diminished as the more extreme elements promote the view that America’s hegemony is an attempt to impose the will of a superpower over the will of Allah. Recruitment by extremists of educated Indonesians and Malaysians with an ideological commitment against the West, which to date has not been particularly successful, may now be made much easier.

Australia needs to listen to the advice from moderate leaders and organisations in neighbouring countries and project a clearer security policy without the shifts and turns which have taken us from the fight on terrorism, to ridding the world of weapons of mass destruction, and on to regime change. In Southeast Asia, and for many Australians, these are different and distinct objectives.

Australia needs allies. In America it has perhaps the most powerful of military allies, but it can never be an equal partnership – and not can it be all-providing. We can only hope that Australia finds a way to balance its American relationship with those that it claims are so important in the region.

*This is an edited version of a presentation by Mr Paul Thomas at a Forum on the War in Iraq, organised by the School of Humanities, Communications and Social Sciences at Monash’s Gippsland campus. Mr Thomas has taught languages both in Australia and Southeast Asia for more than 20 years and established the Indonesian language major at the Gippsland campus.*

# Burning bridges?

## Australia’s neighbours and the war in Iraq

Questions have also been raised in the region as to what Australia’s priorities are in terms of security. Why go into Iraq when, to quote Australia’s most recent Foreign and Trade Policy White Paper, “South-East Asia is where the threat of terrorism to Australian interests is most acute”?

Perhaps the government’s strongest argument for Australia’s current involvement in Iraq comes in Chapter 6 of the same document, entitled ‘Strengthening the US Alliance’. In this chapter, it is made clear that Australia sees the US as its major military ally and that it intends to strengthen its relationship in the coming years.

Clearly, the American alliance is extremely important for Australia. The US has so far proved to be a dependable ally in terms of sharing intelligence on the region as well as the weight its support has brought to the establishment of regional forums such as APEC. The diplomatic pressure it applied on Indonesia during the East Timor crisis should also not be discounted. There was the potential for real conflict in East Timor with Indonesia, and the US reluctance to send troops may well have influenced John Howard’s belief that the military alliance with the US needed shoring up.

Nevertheless, a further strengthening of the US alliance will bring into question Australia’s

ability to act independently in its relations with its neighbours. Clearly, the reaction in the region to the widely reported comments of Australia acting as a ‘deputy sheriff’ for the US, true or otherwise, was a reflection of some of these concerns. Compounding this was the suggestion by the Prime Minister that pre-emptive strikes on terrorists in Southeast Asia was a real possibility. This was viewed as simply mimicking the US rhetoric. Now Australia’s unquestioned support for the US in the Iraqi war appears to have confirmed Australia’s willingness to follow its ally into any conflict, even when its own national interests are not directly at risk.

Opposition in the streets to the war in Iraq will naturally focus on the US, with Australia being seen as a very minor player. However, among those that lead the region’s political parties, religious and educational institutions and the many non-government organisations, there have been definite warnings of a possible deterioration in the relationship with Australia.

In a recent visit to Australia and again on his return to Indonesia, Hasyim Muzadi, chair of Indonesia’s largest Muslim organisation – the Nahdlatul Ulama – called on Australia not to increase or provoke further tensions in the region by involving itself in the war in Iraq.

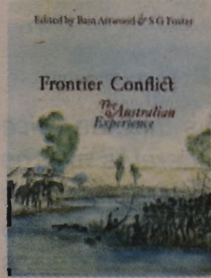
At this stage of the war, it would appear

## INPRINT

## Frontier Conflict:

The Australian Experience

Edited by Bain Attwood and S. G. Foster  
Published by the National Museum of Australia  
RRP: \$39.95



While several books have been written about Australia's involvement in conflict overseas, relatively little has been written about armed conflict within Australia. Based on a forum held at the National Museum of Australia, *Frontier Conflict: The Australian Experience* presents a series of essays by leading contributors to the debate.

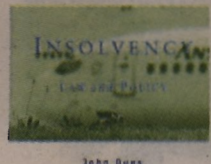
Taken together, these essays contribute to the study of cross-cultural relations in Australia's past and are valuable background for anyone who wishes to understand relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians.

Bain Attwood is an associate professor in the School of Historical Studies at Monash University, currently on secondment to the Australian National University. The book includes a chapter written by Professor Graeme Davison, also from Monash's School of Historical Studies.

## Insolvency:

Law and Policy

By John Duns  
Published by Oxford University Press  
RRP: \$69.95



As individual and corporate insolvencies reach record levels in Australia, it is becoming increasingly important to understand the legal ramifications of insolvency.

*Insolvency: Law and Policy* explains and analyses the law that applies to both insolvent individuals and corporations. The book looks at the objectives of insolvency law, its historical development, the consequences of becoming insolvent and insolvent trading and proceedings.

It will appeal to those who wish to understand not only the existing state of insolvency law, but also the principles and policies that underpin the law.

Mr John Duns is a senior lecturer in the Faculty of Law at Monash University.

## Landscapes, Rock-Art and the Dreaming:

An Archaeology of Preunderstanding

By Bruno David  
Published by Leicester University Press  
RRP: \$175



The apparent timelessness of the Dreaming of Aboriginal Australia intrigues many European observers. In *Landscapes, Rock-Art and the Dreaming*, Bruno David examines the archaeological evidence for dreaming-meditated places, rituals and symbolism.

By tracing through time the archaeological visibility of the Dreaming, the author argues that it is possible to scientifically explore an archaeology of body and mind, identity and being-in-the-world. Ultimately, this investigation is a self-reflective questioning of the preconceptions that guide western notions of Indigenous people in a post-colonial world.

Dr Bruno David is a Logan Fellow and archaeologist in the Department of Geography and Environmental Science at Monash University.

## POSTscript

Former Monash philosopher and ethicist Professor Peter Singer tells the story of his grandfather's experiences in Vienna during World War 2 in his latest book, *Pushing Time Away*. Professor Singer wrote the memoir after discovering some of his grandfather's old letters in a relative's home in Melbourne. The letters tell of his grandparents' early romance, the basis on which they decided to marry, their professional aspirations, and their differing views on Judaism.

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

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## School leaders face demanding new world

## REVIEW

**The New Work of Educational Leaders:** Changing Leadership Practice in an Era of School Reform

By Peter Gronn  
Published by Sage/Paul Chapman Publishing  
RRP: \$63

What it means to be an educational leader in the new millennium is the focus of a new book by Associate Professor Peter Gronn, of Monash University's Faculty of Education.

*The New Work of Educational Leaders* provides a framework for understanding leadership practice in primary and secondary schools throughout Australia, the US, the UK and other English-speaking countries. It is recommended reading for anyone involved in educational leadership and policy-making.

Dr Gronn said one of the most disturbing trends examined in his book was 'leader disengagement' – a growing lack of enthusiasm among younger school teachers to take on leadership roles.

"It's more demanding physically, intellectually and emotionally to be a principal or deputy principal these days," he said. "The bar is perceived as too high, and teachers are choosing to stay in the classroom, thereby creating a shortage of leaders in our schools."

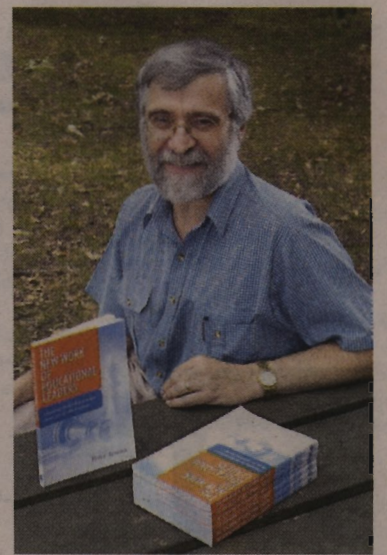
Another reason for leader disengagement was an attitude shift about career progression, Dr Gronn said. "Older teachers tend to have a ladder view of their career, seeing it as a process of moving up the rungs in the school system, but many younger teachers are more interested in career change

and moving into areas other than teaching," he said.

Other major trends covered by the book include 'designer leadership', where school leaders need to meet very tight design specifications, and 'distributed leadership', a situation in which leadership is shared by a number of people rather than a single person.

"Designer leadership is characterised by the use of mandatory standards of assessment and accreditation for school leaders, while awareness of distributed leadership has developed in response to increasing workloads and school self-management scenarios," Dr Gronn said.

"Taken together, the themes of designer leadership, distributed leadership and leader disengagement make up the architectural framework that can be expected to shape much of the new work of educational leaders."



**Leadership framework:** Author Dr Peter Gronn examines the new work of educational leaders.

Photo: Peter Ankljenko

The book also covers the practice of school leadership today, including what school leaders do, committees and meetings, leadership teams, the emotions of leaders, and leadership as 'greedy work'. The term refers to the growing expectation for school leaders to be workaholics, with work becoming an end in itself, rather than a means to an end.

"Because it becomes one's life, greedy work consumes one's life, so that work becomes the measure of what one is and not just what one does," he said. "Greedy work is no laughing matter, the potential for crippling work stress is real."

– Michele Martin

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## Doing it for themselves:

Ms Sarah Ryan (left) and Ms Kate Shearman of Roadworks.

Photo: Richard Crompton

## Students set up own theatre company

A group of performing arts students have set up their own theatre company in an effort to gain professional acting experience while providing a service to the community.

The Roadworks Theatre Company was established earlier this year by five postgraduate and undergraduate students from Monash University's Centre for Drama and Theatre Studies (DTS).

The group, an independent company supported by DTS staff, has already organised its first tour to take place in June. Roadworks will present a stage adaptation of Nadia Wheatley's *Five Times Dizzy*, performing at George Jenkins Theatre in Frankston, the

Drama Theatre in the Performing Arts Complex at Monash's Clayton campus and St Martins Theatre in South Yarra.

Next year, the students plan to begin regional tours, performing for primary and secondary school students in areas that do not generally attract live entertainment.

General manager of the company and third-year student Ms Lisa Parnis said the company would not only provide the students with professional acting experience, it would also benefit regional communities.

"All the students have done amateur work, but some have not had any professional experience," she said.

"This is such a hard industry to find work in – which is why we decided to do something for ourselves. We are creating sustainable employment for ourselves and, at the same time, serving a need in the community."

Ms Parnis said the group aimed to produce low-cost, professional theatre made by and for young people. They hope to gain funding through community grants schemes and independent sponsorship.

– Diane Squires

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Ph: +61 3 9905 2970

## UK ceramist in residence at Art and Design

A leading ceramist from the UK is the latest participant in the Artist/Designer in Residence Program conducted by Monash University's Faculty of Art and Design.

Professor Richard Slee, who arrived in March, is currently working with the ceramics studio and exhibiting his work in the Faculty Gallery exhibition *Hyper-Crafting*, on show until 19 April.

According to Dr Christopher Headley, coordinator of the ceramics and sculpture studios, Professor Slee is providing students with a challenging insight into the practice of contemporary ceramics.

Professor Slee's career as a studio ceramist has spanned more than 30 years. He attended the Central School of Art Design, where he graduated with a first class honours degree in ceramics. He undertook his masters degree at the Royal College of Art in the 1990s.

Since 1973 he has held teaching positions at leading British art schools, and from 1980 has maintained his own studio in Brighton. His works are part of public collections in Great Britain, the US, Sweden, Holland, Japan and Korea. In 2001, he was awarded the Jerwood Applied Arts Prize for Ceramics for his significant contribution to contemporary ceramics in Britain over a five-year period.

Since its inception in 2000, the faculty's Artist/Designer in Residence teaching and research program has attracted respected artists and designers from around the world with backgrounds in painting, sculpture, drawing, metals and jewellery, printmaking, ceramics, graphic design, industrial design and glass.

Other highlights from this year's program include Mah Rana, a jeweller and metal-smith from the UK, and Hong Kong visual artist Chi Wo Leung, who arrives in June.

Dr Headley says the program is working extremely well. "It provides our students with an opportunity to view international trends and developments emerging in art and design and enhances the studio education that is the focus of art and design studies at Monash," he said.

For further information on the 2003 Artist/Designer in Residence Program, see [www.artdes.monash.edu.au](http://www.artdes.monash.edu.au).

— Karen Stichtenoth



A study of contrasts: 'The Bat Attack' from Rehgán De Mather's *Art Boy vs Bat Boy* exhibition at the Switchback Gallery.

## Two lives come together to create unusual images

An unusual lifestyle working as a painter by day and a barman by night provided the inspiration for artist Rehgán De Mather's latest body of work, *Batman and the Barman*.

The first instalment of the series — *Art Boy vs Bar Boy* — is now on display at the Switchback Gallery at Monash University's Gippsland campus until 24 April.

De Mather, 22, is a multi-award winning visual arts graduate from Monash Gippsland. A local artist who grew up in Sale, he has been painting prolifically since the age of 15.

"*Batman and the Barman* is a body of work inspired by my split lifestyle and nocturnal habits. In essence, the work is fuelled by elements and themes from my experiences and environments from the past four years and examines the two contrasting lifestyles," he said.

"It developed into a large body of work in an attempt to bring together and consolidate two opposing forces."

*Art Boy vs Bar Boy* includes two large paintings (244cm x 854cm), 'Art Boy (Busy Playing Art)' and 'Batman and the Barman', that operate as the central point for the exhibition, looking specifically at the two contrasting sides of De Mather's life.

In creating *Batman and the Barman*, he used myriad materials, mostly acrylic and enamel house paints and mistints, which he found more flexible and user-friendly than professional artist-grade paint. He also employs spray paint, oilstick, gouache, charcoal, pastel and collage.

"While any consolidation or even personal catharsis may exist or be evident in the work, ultimately *Batman and the Barman* uses my experiences as both artist and barman

as a means to an end in the attempt to create interesting and engaging images," he said.

— Karen Stichtenoth

### SHOW NOTES

**What:** *Batman and the Barman/ Art Boy vs Bar Boy*

**When:** 1 to 24 April

**Where:** Switchback Gallery, Gippsland Centre for Art and Design, Gippsland campus

**Who:** For more information, contact the gallery on +61 3 5122 6261.

The second instalment of the series, *Travelling Without Moving*, will be exhibited at the Gippsland Art Gallery in Sale from 4 to 27 April, while the third, *Nocturnal Selections*, will be on display at the Stella Dimadis Gallery in Melbourne from 3 to 21 May.

## Veteran stars bring *Hollow Crown* to Alexander Theatre

Monash University will host three performances of the Royal Shakespeare Company's (RSC) acclaimed production of *The Hollow Crown* this month.

The play begins its run at the Alexander Theatre on 15 April with two evening performances and one matinee scheduled.

Currently touring Australia and New Zealand, the play comes direct from a sell-out season at the RSC home in Stratford-upon-Avon and stars Derek Jacobi, Janet Suzman, Donald Sinden and Ian Richardson. It is the first time the four classically trained actors have shared the stage together to star in a production.

*The Hollow Crown* is considered one of the RSC's most successful and entertaining productions. It was devised in 1961 by John Barton for the RSC as a celebratory entertainment about the kings and queens of England.

*The Hollow Crown* gives a human face to the changing role of the monarchy through the ages that is at once beguiling and humorous.

The audience is taken back in time from Richard I to Queen Victoria, as the play relives real moments in history through the men and women who have worn the Crown and played out their lives on the stage of England's Court. The stories are told through letters, speeches, poems, songs and music.

Highlights include Richard II's soliloquy at Pomfret Castle through to Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* and Queen Victoria's naively moving description of her own coronation, as well as an entertaining but ignorant account of the monarchy from Henry IV to Charles I by a 15-year-old Jane Austen.

— Karen Stichtenoth

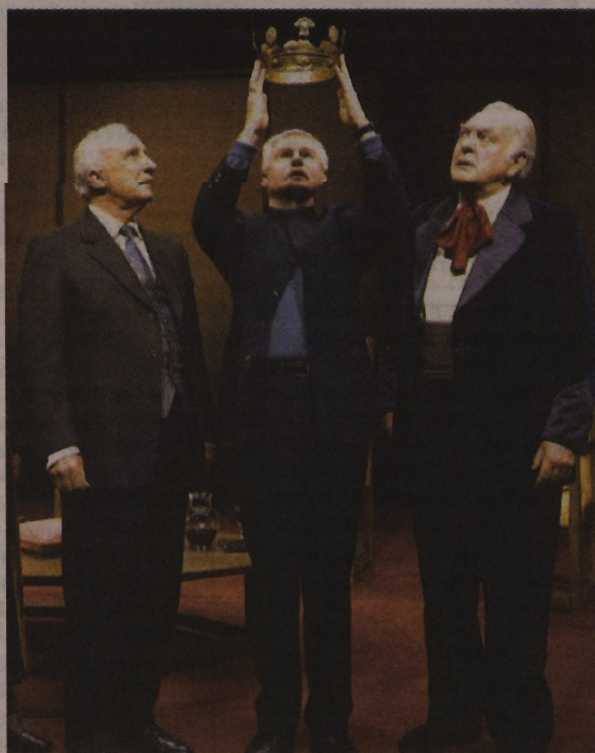
### SHOW NOTES:

**What:** *The Hollow Crown*

**When:** 15 and 16 April, 8 pm; matinee 16 April, 1 pm

**Where:** Alexander Theatre, Clayton campus

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



Classic entertainment: From left, Ian Richardson, Derek Jacobi and Donald Sinden in *The Hollow Crown*.

## ARTS BRIEFS

### Contemporary ceramic works on show

An exhibition of contemporary ceramics showcasing works by prominent Australian and international ceramic artists is on display at the Faculty Gallery at Monash University's Caulfield campus until 19 April.

*Hyper-Crafting* includes pieces by Fiona Murphy, Gary Bish, Stephen Benwell, Michael Doolan, Lynda Draper, Stefan Szonyi and Richard Slee.

The exhibition demonstrates how contemporary artists working in the field of ceramics are firmly rooted in the traditional technical practices of the craft.

### The Christian Brothers begins at Monash

Australia's highly acclaimed John Bell will direct Ron Blair's *The Christian Brothers* when it begins its 2003 national tour at Monash University's Alexander Theatre on 29 and 30 April.

The very candid yet humorous play is based on Blair's own experiences with the Christian Brothers during his school years.

Actor Peter Carroll recreates the leading role in this one-man show as an overworked teaching Brother who cajoles and bullies his pupils as he races through classes in history, French, literature, physics and Christian doctrine.

### The Sheryls return to Comedy Festival

Australia's first ladies of glam rock, The Sheryls, are in Melbourne to premiere their new show, *This is Vinyl Tap*, at the 2003 Melbourne International Comedy Festival this month.

Group spokesperson Wendy Little, who works and studies at Monash University, says the new show, directed by Judith Chaplin-Flemming, will "knock the socks off all those who see it".

The show will premiere at 7 Alfred Place, Melbourne, on Saturday 5 April, with six shows in all.

The Sheryls — Jo Gill, Irene Guzowski and Ms Little — first came together in 1998 for a one-off Melbourne Fringe festival project. Since then, the group has become an established part of the Melbourne comedy scene, wowing audiences at the Fringe and the International Comedy festivals.

### Symphony kicks off 2003 season

The Melbourne Symphony has returned to Monash for a 2003 series.

The orchestra performed *On a Moonlit Night* at the Robert Blackwood Concert Hall recently in the first of a four-performance series at Monash.

They will return to Monash on 2 May to perform *Pictures at an Exhibition* at 8 pm in the same venue. The opening section of the piece, to be conducted by Hiroyuki Iwaki, was inspired by the paintings of 15th-century Italian painter Piero della Francesca.

The Melbourne Symphony will also perform at Monash on 18 July and 12 September.

For performance details, go to [www.mso.com.au](http://www.mso.com.au) or call +61 3 9626 1111.

# Students learn the art of communication

## MEDICINE

Good medicine is as much about effective communication as it is about anatomy, biology and genetics, Monash University first-year medical students are discovering.

During their first semester at Monash, each of the 215 students in the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences' clinical skills program interviews 'patients' in preparation for their contact with the real thing.

The students get to practise their skills on the patients in tutorials before being placed at a general practice clinic or in a hospital ward.

Faculty lecturer Dr Debra Nestel said the program gave the students, most of whom were just out of secondary school, the opportunity to gain both confidence and experience in the relative security of a familiar setting.

She said receiving the correct training for the first contact with patients was crucial for the students to establish the patient's concerns and the reasons for the visit, and clearly pass these on to the supervising doctor.

"In many respects, communication is the core clinical skill," Dr Nestel said. "It is very important that students learn at an early stage to value the patient's perspective, especially before they are overwhelmed by learning about the medical situation."



**Art of communication:** 'Patient' Mrs Dianne Turner, right, is helping students in the medical faculty learn how to communicate before they are placed in general practice clinics or hospital wards.

Photo: Peter Anikljenko

The faculty uses both lay people and professional actors as patients. The patients are given a pre-determined role – such as a middle-aged woman suffering from depression, an injured labourer, or a man fearful he has stomach cancer – and present a history to the student.

"The key is that the students have to coax much of the information out of the patient by asking the right questions and responding appropriately," lecturer Dr Lyndall

Whitecross said. "They quickly realise that dealing with a 'professional' patient is very different to role-playing with fellow students."

The patients, such as Mrs Dianne Turner, provide valuable feedback to the students in a number of different ways, including the manner in which they introduce themselves and the types of questions they ask.

Mrs Turner, who is a part-time teacher and librarian, volunteered a year ago to be involved in the program

because she believes it is important for aspiring doctors to hone their communication skills.

The program is currently recruiting lay people to act as patients on a voluntary basis. Training is provided.

– Allison Harding

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## 'Language bulldozers' threaten national identities

### LINGUISTICS

Languages are disappearing so rapidly that if the trend continues at the same rate, in 100 years' time only 10 per cent of the world's current languages will be in existence, according to the new chair of linguistics at Monash University, Professor Kate Burridge.

"This phenomenon, known as 'language endangerment', is one of the hottest topics in linguistics at the moment," Professor Burridge said.

"It's partly due to the 'linguistic bulldozer' impact of widely spoken languages like Indonesian, Spanish and of course English. For speakers of dying languages, it means a vital part of their cultural and social identity is disappearing."

Professor Burridge said the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) now identifies language survival as a high priority, and linguists around the world are undertaking practical work to save dying languages.

"Many people are assisting communities in their efforts to document and maintain the traditional languages. Indeed, several linguists at Monash are doing exactly this kind of work," she said.

"Efforts must be made to enthuse speakers within these communities and to make them realise they can reap the economic benefits of the dominant language while continuing to speak the languages that are so much a part of their identity."

Professor Burridge, who joined Monash in February, first became interested in linguistics through her study of German literature and reading texts in Old High German and Middle High German.

One of her current research subjects is the endangered Pennsylvania German, a lively mixture of German dialects, spoken by the Amish and Mennonite peoples in North America.

She is also working with Monash linguistics reader Dr Keith Allen on a book about language taboos – words we cannot or do not like to use related to topics including death, disease, body parts and functions, and religion.

Well known to both linguists and non-linguists alike, Professor Burridge has spoken many times on ABC Radio.

Monash Arts dean Professor Homer Le Grand said Professor Burridge's research and teaching interests informed her "very popular and enlightening" ABC Radio talks on many aspects of language.

"She's a public intellectual, as well as a dynamic woman, who will bring much to the university," he said.

– Michele Martin



Professor Kate Burridge

# Air attack has ants in retreat

## BIOLOGICAL SCIENCE

The yellow crazy ants that have been decimating Christmas Island's world-renowned red crab population and damaging the island's ecology have been stopped in their tracks by an aerial baiting campaign developed by a team from Monash University and Parks Australia.

The team has worked to all but wipe out the supercolonies of crazy ants that were first detected in the island's rainforest in 1998.

Monash researchers and students, led by Dr Dennis O'Dowd, a reader in the School of Biological Sciences, have spent the past three years evaluating the ants' destructive effects on the red crabs – famous for their annual migration – and the island's ecosystem.

"It quickly became obvious that we had to do something about the crazy ants as they were devastating the island's ecosystem and had killed



or displaced an estimated 15 to 20 million crabs by occupying their burrows, killing and consuming resident crabs, and using their burrows as nest sites," Dr O'Dowd said. "Not only had this reduced the red crab population by 30 per cent, it also caused a rapid shift in the island's



**Left:** Frenetic crazy ants can reach extraordinary numbers and forage over every available surface in island rainforest. **Above:** Monash research fellow Dr Peter Green hauls an insect trap up into the forest canopy to assess the impact of crazy ants on biodiversity.

forest structure and composition, endangering many of the species unique to Christmas Island."

In 2001, Monash and Parks Australia completed an exhaustive survey of Christmas Island to determine the full extent of the crazy ant infestation and associated impacts on red crabs. This showed that, since their accidental introduction to the island some time before 1934, crazy ants had infested about 2500 hectares – or 25 per cent – of forest on Christmas Island.

Monash research fellow Dr Peter Green played the pivotal role in designing and coordinating the control program.

"After completing the survey, it became apparent that a large proportion of the ant infestation, about 1600 hectares, would be inaccessible by foot," Dr Green said.

"We had to act. It was decided that aerial baiting would be the only effective method for treating the vast majority of crazy ant supercolonies.

"A key challenge was to find bait

that was attractive to crazy ants but not harmful to humans or other animals such as birds and crabs."

The bait chosen was fish meal containing low concentrations of an insecticide called fipronil. In September 2002, the 2500 hectares of yellow crazy ant supercolonies were baited and two weeks later, monitoring showed that many of the crazy ants had been killed.

"Their activity had been reduced by 99 per cent," Dr O'Dowd said. "Data collected from 50 monitoring stations across the island indicated that the baiting had achieved immediate control of all known crazy ant supercolonies."

The Federal Environment Minister Dr David Kemp said the successful control of crazy ants was an excellent example of how government and scientific partnerships could work together to protect Australia's unique biodiversity.

– Penny Fannin

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