

# MONASH UNIVERSITY NEWS

## Early success in abuse trial

BY CHRISTINE GILES

**Joint research by Monash University and the Australian Catholic University Canberra into the handling of child abuse allegations by the Family Court has resulted in the trial of a new, more efficient system of dispute resolution in Melbourne.**

Although evaluation will not be finished until next year, early indications show parents are more likely to reach agreement over an abused child's care and resolve the dispute more quickly.

The research, by the Monash Department of Social Work and Human Services and the ACU Canberra Department of Social Work, looked at how the court managed child abuse allegations in custody and access disputes. It found that such cases made up half the court's workload in children's matters, taking an

average 17.5 months to reach resolution and in one case, eight years.

A study, including data collected from Canberra and Melbourne court registries, was presented to the Chief Justice of the Family Court, Justice Alastair Nicholson, in 1997, with a recommendation that a new system be established to handle such cases.

As a result, Justice Nicholson set up a committee - chaired by former magistrate Linda Dessau - to develop an alternative. Known as 'Project Magellan', the new system allocates special sitting days each month to hear child abuse cases, has tighter requirements on State Child Protection Service investigations, and mandatory legal representation for each child involved.

The committee consists of representatives from the Federal Attorney-General's Department, Victoria Legal Aid, the Department of Human



Professor Thea Brown. Photo by Greg Ford.

Services, judges, counsellors, and court and university staff.

Professor of Social Work at Monash Thea Brown says the Family Violence

and Family Court Research Program started in 1995 after separate research into family violence and child abuse revealed concerns about Family Court proceedings.

"We were concerned about the problems, not just because they had become such a major part of the (court's) workload, but we found that the levels of distress among the children was very high," she said.

"We also found that families bringing these problems to the court were pretty troubled, so to expect them to solve the problems themselves was not possible. The court had to be pro-active in developing a system for the families, rather than expecting them to develop a system through the courts."

The trial is being funded by the Attorney-General's Department, the Family Court and Victoria Legal Aid. The Australian Research Council has funded the research and evaluation.

## Hospitals miss drug reactions

BY CHRISTINE GILES

**Research by a Monash post-graduate pharmacy student has revealed that most adverse drug reactions in children are not picked up by the voluntary reporting system at Melbourne's Royal Children's Hospital.**

PhD student Kylie Easton last year completed a 29-week stint at the hospital, including 11 weeks monitoring daily admissions to the emergency department.

The study by Ms Easton, undertaken with the RCH pharmacy department and her supervisor Dr Joanne Brien, was part of Australian-first research into drug-related problems that cause children to be hospitalised.

While emphasising that collected data was still at a preliminary analysis stage and being reviewed by a panel of medical experts, Ms Easton said early indications of under-reporting had resulted in a review of the hospital's existing reporting procedures.

"One thing that became quite apparent was that the spontaneous reporting system for adverse drug reactions at the hospital wasn't picking up all of the reactions we saw in our study," she explained.

"On the wards, there are forms that doctors, nurses or pharmacists fill out when they think a patient has experienced an adverse drug reaction.

"But in terms of admissions and emergency department attendances associated with these reactions, only 1.7 per cent of the ones that we found in our study were reported by that system. As a result, a panel has been set up at the Children's Hospital to look at how to improve the situation.

"The hospital has a good system in terms of displaying posters in the wards and incentives for reporting adverse drug reactions, but obviously it still doesn't make people report them as they should."

Ms Easton's ongoing research, titled 'Consequences of drug-related problems in paediatrics', will take her to Geelong Hospital this year, and then on to Box Hill Hospital.

Continued on page 2

## Back to uni for Russian dinosaurs



Looking through the jaws of a prehistoric era: Ms Lesley Kool, manager of Monash University's Palaeontology Laboratory, gets close to a 7-metre long *Tarbosaurus*, just one of the exhibits on show at the Ghosts of the Great Russian Dinosaurs exhibition presented by the Monash Science Centre at Deakin University's Rusden campus. Open Sundays 11 am - 5 pm until November. For more information, call the Monash Science Centre on (03) 9905 1370. Photo by Greg Ford.

## Inside

### News

#### How healthy is the Yarra?

A Monash study is examining the impact of urbanisation on one of Melbourne's most famous landmarks - the Yarra River.

Page 3

### News

#### Accountants trigger IT boom

Accounting firms are opting to counter the Y2K bug by investing in new IT systems, creating an IT boom, according to a Monash researcher.

Page 3

### Opinion

#### The future of the information revolution

Society is struggling to keep up with the information revolution. A revival of the political process is needed to help people make sense of their world.

Page 5

### Arts

#### Standing up for artists

The community should respect artists' moral and economic rights, according to a Monash academic.

Page 6

# Monash helps empower our young citizens

**Can you name Australia's first prime minister? Well, if you said no, you're probably not alone.**

According to the 1994 National Civic Survey, 60 per cent of Australians cannot name the two federal houses of parliament. The same number lack knowledge about how the Constitution can be changed, despite having voted in referendums.

But in time for the new millennium, the Federal Government is spending more than \$17 million on a new project, 'Discovering Democracy', which aims to give all young Australians the knowledge and skills they need to be effective, active and responsible citizens by the time they leave school.

According to Mr Max Moegerlein, a school teacher from Diamond Valley Secondary College, the lack of knowledge about the civic world often isn't addressed in schools.

"Many of my students were not aware of who the major politicians were, and some barely knew the name of our Prime Minister. This only improved after an intensive teaching program," he said.

As part of the 'Discovering Democracy' project, a new professional development program is being developed in Monash University's Faculty of Education to educate primary and secondary teachers about teaching civics and citizenship education in schools.

The program, being developed by Ms Libby Tudball, Ms Rosalie Trioli, Ms Anita Forsyth and Ms Judith D'Aloisio, will be delivered across all regions of Victoria and offered to every primary and secondary teacher in the state. It will include core and elective units as well as an interactive web site.

Ms Tudball, who is also project leader, believes there is a great need to get civics and citizenship education back onto the education agenda and into classrooms and communities.

"Teachers need to explore the variety of ways civics and citizenship education can be part of school programs," she said.

"Students need to realise that they have the power to make changes in society, for example through community involvement or voting. We need to encourage active participation and our

project aims to show teachers how this can happen."

A video being developed for the program will feature academics, teachers and students in schools talking about the elements they see as vital to civics and citizenship education.

"We are currently filming schools which are putting these ideas into practice," Ms Tudball said.

Included on the video will be students from Brighton Secondary college, who spend half a day each week doing voluntary work in the community as part of their citizenship studies.

Teachers taking part in the program, which will be offered both in 1999 and in 2000, will receive accreditation from Monash University.

And, if you're still wondering who Australia's first prime minister was, it was Edmund Barton.

For more information, contact the Monash Professional Development Institute on (03) 9904 4321.

## BRIEFS

### Politics lecturers head to Princeton

Two members of Monash University's Politics department have accepted visiting positions at Princeton University in the US.

Professor Alastair Davidson has been appointed a professorial fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies, whose members have included luminaries such as Albert Einstein, Oswald Veblen and Hetty Goldman.

Dr Roger Spegele will be a visiting fellow at the Centre for International Studies, a major research arm of the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs.

Their appointments extend from September this year through to June 2000.

### Monash to host major industry conference

Monash University's Economics department, in association with the Productivity Commission, will hold a major industry economics conference in Melbourne next month.

The conference, 'Regulation, Competition and Industry Structure', will be held at the Hotel Ibis on 12 and 13 July.

The event will bring together specialists working in academia, the public sector and business to exchange ideas on recent advances in industrial economics and its applications to the economics of regulation.

Keynote speakers include Professor John Panzar from Northwestern University in the US, an expert on contestability and regulation, and the president of Australia's National Competition Commission, Mr Graeme Samuel.

A workshop on the evolution of industrial structures in Asia will be held in conjunction with the conference on 14 July.

For more details, visit the website at [www.buseco.monash.edu.au/Depts/Eco/](http://www.buseco.monash.edu.au/Depts/Eco/)

### Support group formed for Cambodia

A new group has been formed at Monash University to provide support for Cambodia.

The Monash Cambodia Support Group will hold meetings and presentations to promote awareness of Cambodian issues and raise funds for Cambodian projects.

The group will facilitate voluntary work as well as work and study tours in Cambodia through the Australian Aid for Cambodia Fund.

For more information, contact Ms Sokhanna Chea on (03) 9503 8240 or email: [sche10@student.monash.edu.au](mailto:sche10@student.monash.edu.au).

### New hospital planned for Berwick

A new community hospital is to be built next to Monash University's Berwick campus.

The 150-bed Berwick Community Hospital, due to open late next year, will have 24-hour emergency care.

Berwick campus director Professor John Anderson welcomed the Victorian government's announcement.

"The reasons for building a hospital in this location are very similar to the reasons why Monash built a university campus here," he said.

"This is a growth area of outer Melbourne, and there are growing health and educational needs for the residents of Berwick and the surrounding suburbs."

### Agreement reached with Malaysian nurses

Monash University's School of Nursing has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Malaysian Nurses Association (MNA) to collaborate on professional development activities.

The agreement, signed recently by Monash vice-chancellor Professor David Robinson and MNA president Ms Lee Siew Hoon, calls for Monash and the MNA to cooperate on activities of common interest.

The partnership will concentrate on professional development activities, including the promotion of courses and programs and the exchange of academic material and research.

The MNA is a professional nursing organisation representing registered nurses in Malaysia.



Monash Diploma of Education students Barbara Murphy (left) and Vanessa Callery demonstrate an airflow experiment to Year 8, 9 and 10 students as part of National Science Week at Monash. With 'time' as the theme of the week, more than 1500 students participated in activities such as 'Slime Time' - exploring the properties of solids and liquids - and built hot air balloons, fired off rockets, conducted experiments on body clocks and discovered the properties of liquid nitrogen.

## Hospitals miss drug reactions

Continued from page 1



Pharmacy researcher Ms Kylie Easton.

Inspired by her contact with children during training at the Royal Children's Hospital and a disturbing lack of research in the field, Ms Easton said only 17 studies existed world-wide on the subject, and none had been published in Australia.

"I've found, in my references, probably more than 40 or 50 studies for

adults, but for paediatrics it's very limited in terms of the number available," she said.

"Obviously, there's a need for Australian-based research, but we're also hoping to raise the awareness of a wide range of health professionals about the quality use of medicines in children.

"We also want to raise community awareness because where you have non-compliance with medication use, a proportion of that is as a result of community attitudes."

The study covers children from birth through to 17 years of age and eight medically recognised categories of drug-related problems, ranging from adverse reactions and the effects of incorrect drug use to multiple drug incompatibility and overdoses.

Also being investigated are the economic and social costs of children's drug-related hospital admissions and emergency department attendances.

"We're getting the costs for each case from the hospital, and we are also looking at indirect costs such as parents travelling to the hospital and taking time off work," Ms Easton said.

# Study examines health of Yarra

**A \$1 million study is investigating the changes brought about by urbanisation of one of Melbourne's most famous landmarks - the Yarra River.**

The study, led by Dr Peter Breen, is being conducted at Monash University by the Cooperative Research Centre for Freshwater Ecology (CRCFE) and Melbourne Water, a CRCFE member. Dr Breen, who is employed by Melbourne Water, is based at Monash's Water Studies Centre.

The Yarra River plays an important role in the lives of more than 2.5 million Melburnians. From its source in the Yarra Ranges, the river provides most of the city's water supply, and in the outer east it supports an agricultural industry worth more than \$135 million annually.

In metropolitan Melbourne, the Yarra has become the focal point of recreational and tourism activity. Yet very little is known about what makes this lowland river tick.

Dr Breen says that while there have been no major problems with the Yarra, increasing development in the catchment means it is important to ensure a secure future for the river.

"European settlement has resulted in some very significant changes to the river and its catchment," he said.

"Land use has changed dramatically. About 18 per cent of the catchment is now urban, while 46 per cent is agricultural and 36 per cent is used for water supply and timber production. Urbanisation and agricultural development have increased runoff as well as the transport of sediment, pollutants and nutrients into the river.

"By building dams and levees, we have reduced the river's interaction with its floodplain - the source of much of the river's carbon, or fuel, supplies."

The study will focus on three of the Yarra's five distinct segments: rural lowland (from Wesburn to the upper end of Warrandyte Gorge), gorge (Warrandyte Gorge to Fitzsimons Lane), and urban lowlands (from Fitzsimons Lane to Dight Falls).

It will examine the impact of urbanisation on each of these



Yarra researcher Dr Peter Breen. Photo by Greg Ford.

segments by looking at different parts of the food web in each segment, starting with the nutrients that are bound up in the river segments. The fieldwork will also include water quality analyses and microbiological work.

Ecological functioning in the river will be assessed by measuring the production and use of oxygen and carbon in both the water and sediments of the river.

Macroinvertebrates, or bugs, will also be sampled at 30 locations along the three study segments to evaluate patterns in the river's ecological structure.

Dr Breen said macroinvertebrates, by their presence or absence, could tell observers a lot about conditions in particular locations. They are used extensively by water managers throughout Australia as indicators of stream health.

The study will examine the relationship between the macroinvertebrate communities and local and catchment scale environmental variables, and whether these relationships are similar in the small tributary streams and main stem of the Yarra.

This article was reproduced from the CRCFE's newsletter, *Watershed*.

# Accounting firms continue a march in the dark with IT

BY PETER GOLDIE

**Accounting firms are choosing to protect themselves against possible year 2000 computer malfunctions by investing in entirely new systems rather than modifying existing ones, creating an apparent boom in uptake, according to research by Professor Amrik Sohal of Monash University's Department of Management.**

A combination of the need to remain competitive and the need to address Y2K is triggering the boom in new IT projects, despite a persisting lack of yardsticks by which to measure the effectiveness of the new technologies in achieving strategic corporate goals.

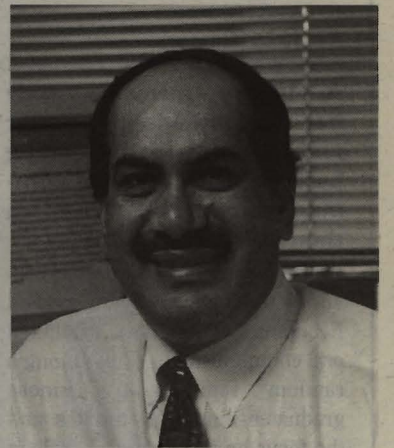
Professor Sohal, who is also director of the department's Quality Management Research Unit, has been looking at how managers cope with IT, who generates ideas, who implements them and how effective they are.

"Studies we have done looking at the adoption of all sorts of new technologies and systems suggest managers have problems trying to align the decision regarding IT and investment with the overall business objectives," he told *Monash News*.

As part of his work, he has published with colleagues a report for the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia looking at the uptake of IT among their members and analysing impediments.

After responses from nearly 250 firms, the inquiry found that accounting companies were ploughing ahead with IT investment, despite being confronted with issues such as obsolescence and Y2K. Much investment is still being undertaken in a fashion marked by internal confusion over the implementation and potential applications of new IT.

"Although most businesses had achieved operational benefits from their IT investments, very few have



Professor Amrik Sohal. Photo by Andrew Barcham.

translated these into strategic business benefits," the report said.

"This is shown by the relatively little positive outcome that was evidenced in areas that one would associate with strategic business benefits, such as competitive advantage, market share increase and deterrence of entry."

Overall, the survey asked managers to outline their IT projects, provide information about who generated the concepts and who implemented them, and to rate them on a simple 'most successful' or 'least successful' basis.

Significant patterns emerged, with top management identified with the major successes and shortcomings of projects. The importance of senior management aligning corporate objectives with technical capacity and application power as well as building a skilled team to evaluate and implement the project was essential.

Unfortunately, in many cases the difficulties confronting senior management in staying abreast of technological advances results in a gap between generation and implementation, a gap which can mean the project fails to meet its objectives.

The report shows that while top management gave itself credit for generating nearly half of all the most successful IT project ideas (49 per cent), their responses suggest they see concepts developed elsewhere within the organisation as performing less well than their own.

In addition, they tend to continue to rely heavily on outside advice, from vendors and consultants, in the face of evidence that advice solely from these quarters can have a very low 'most successful' rate.

Best results come from a combination of careful senior management project generation, input on the specific business requirements from an in-house team, and technical expertise obtained externally.

Regardless of impediments and quantifiable results, businesses continue to invest in new IT, in many cases using the approaching Y2K scare to revamp whole systems and hoping to get a two to three-year breathing space before the shadow of obsolescence overtakes them once more.

# Spend now and save later

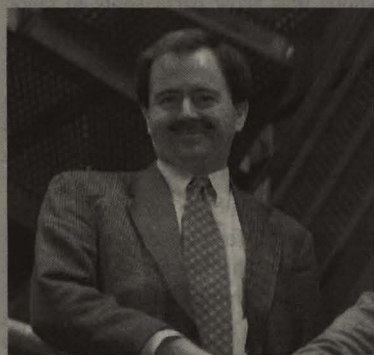
BY KAY ANSELL

**If the Federal Government can produce a \$5.2 billion budget surplus under the present tax system, why introduce the GST?**

This was the question raised by Monash's Professor Peter Dixon at the post-Budget breakfast he addressed on 14 May at Monash's Peninsula campus as part of the Monash-Syme Business Associates Program.

Coincidentally, it was the day Senator Brian Harradine rocked Canberra by coming out against the GST.

In his assessment of the Budget, Professor Dixon also questioned the need for such a large surplus, suggesting the price being paid by the present generation can be measured



Professor Peter Dixon.

in increased poverty, and cuts to services such as education and health.

It came down to a notion of inter-generational equity, says Professor Dixon, director of Monash's Centre of Policy Studies. That is, weighing the advantages of funding investment in the Australian economy by using domestic savings (the surplus) as

against foreign savings. Relying more heavily on domestic savings meant that Australia would keep a greater proportion of economic profits.

A disadvantage was that less money was being spent now on services and public infrastructure so that future generations would benefit: "We are richer in the long run, that is, our children will be richer." A larger surplus is trading off present consumption for future consumption.

But if he allowed himself a value judgement, Professor Dixon would prefer to see the money spent now on improving the community's quality of life and reducing poverty; he believes future generations will have enough advantages (through better education and better technology, for example) to take care of themselves.

"There is a reasonable argument that we really don't need to save on their behalf," he said.

It was inter-generational equity, of a sort, that appeared to motivate Senator Harradine later that day when he finally opposed the GST. Senator Harradine said he could not impose "an impersonal, indiscriminate tax on my children, my grandchildren and their children for generations to come".

One hopes that Senator Harradine also took into account Professor Dixon's presentation to the Senate Select Committee on a New Tax System in December last year.

Using the well-respected Monash Model, Professor Dixon disproved the Howard Government's case for a GST, which had asserted that the GST was needed because the present tax system would not raise enough revenue to meet Australia's future needs.

Continued on page 7

# Grads need oral skills: study

By JOSIE GIBSON

**A Monash University study has recommended greater emphasis on developing business students' oral communication skills to prepare them for the workplace.**

The 12-month project, conducted by Faculty of Business and Economics researchers, examined oral communication skills among a random sample of business graduates, employer attitudes, and the focus on teaching oral skills in the faculty's undergraduate curriculum.

The researchers found a clear need to improve the focus on such skills at university to better prepare students for career demands.

The research was conducted by Ms Glenda Crosling, a Language and Learning Services lecturer in the faculty, and Associate Professor Ian Ward of the Economics department.

They found that oral communication was integral to business graduates' jobs. Most communication took the form of work-related discussions, listening, following instructions and responding verbally, and informal social chat. Graduates needed to be able to work in teams as well as take part in discussions.

"Employers of graduates often express concern at the ability of such employees to express themselves well, and professional bodies, such as accounting, have explicitly named oral communication as one of the skills graduate accountants should possess," the researchers said.

"Along with broad and critical views, oral communication is one of the generic skills which encapsulates the aims of higher education."

Ms Crosling and Dr Ward argue that both university and

employer companies have a role in developing oral communication skills, and more research is needed to determine a suitable balance.

At university, however, more emphasis is needed on oral competency, but its development should take place in the context of a critical approach.

"While there are a significant number of faculty subjects which make use of oral communication skills in student assessment, most of the focus is on tutorial participation plus some formal presentation," Ms Crosling and Dr Ward said.

"Some departments don't use any oral forms of assessment. At present, it is possible to graduate with little in the way of assessment based on oral communication skills."

The researchers recommend that students be exposed to more oral forms of assessment than classroom discussion and participation. They should be required to present formally, engage in critical discussion and learn to defend their views, in both group and individual situations.

The researchers also make the point that, irrespective of their native language, oral communication skills are essential for graduate employees in the workplace. However, the researchers caution that it is not simply a matter of language.

"For many international students, it is not so much a lack of English language skills but a consequence of cultural educational background that often discourages oral communication, particularly of a critical nature, and of differing cultural conventions," they said.

# Sculpture demonstrates power of cooperation



The title of Clive Murray-White's sculpture, 'Lars Compitalis?', translates roughly to 'the carers of the crossroads and the city?' Photo by The Visual Resource.

**A unique alliance between the corporate sector and the arts community culminated recently in the gift of a major public sculpture to Victoria's Latrobe Valley.**

'Lars Compitalis?' was created by sculptor Clive Murray-White and results from a partnership between Victoria's largest electricity generation company, Loy Yang Power, the Australia Council and Monash University.

Murray-White, a lecturer in sculpture at Monash Gippsland's Centre for Art and Design, has been working at Loy Yang Power for the past two years

as senior company artist. The appointment is part of an Australia Council-funded research project aimed at encouraging business and the corporate sector to utilise artists' skills.

The sculptor worked with the support of four Monash research assistants as well as Loy Yang Power employees, contractors and the La Trobe Shire on the 12-month project.

The sculpture was officially unveiled by the Federal Minister for the Arts and Member for Gippsland, Mr Peter McGauran, at a ceremony in Traralgon's Victory Park.

In an interesting twist, its bases have been constructed from 'idlers', part of the conveyors that transport

coal from the mine to the power station at Loy Yang Power. A number of Latrobe Valley businesses donated material and labour towards locating the work where it will be accessible to the community.

'Lars Compitalis?' translates roughly to 'the carers of the crossroads and the city?'

According to Murray-White, the composition was based on two large carved marble heads that looked as if they had been discovered by archaeologists in Loy Yang Power's huge brown coal mine.

"The whole experience has had a remarkable impact on me," he said.

## Peninsula library opened

**Monash University's Peninsula campus library was officially opened last month.**

The \$3.8 million purpose-built facility was designed by award-winning architects Williams and Boag to meet the expectations of 21st-century learning requirements.

The final result is a facility that combines traditional learning tools with an increasing range of electronic information sources.

The library was officially opened by the deputy vice-chancellor (Academic and Planning) Professor Alan Lindsay, who commented that the new building was not only a resource for the students who attended the Peninsula campus and

other academic institutions but also a community resource.

"Any member of the public can use the library's facilities and obtain borrowing rights," Professor Lindsay said.

"The library also features a VTAC Access point, a dedicated computer terminal established to give people without Internet access an opportunity to access the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre's infonet. And prospective students will be able to come into the library, browse the VTAC Guide online, and lodge their VTAC applications."

-Julie Ryan

## Schools



### Teachers' seminar

The annual Monash Teachers' Seminar will be held on 17 June, from 9.30 am until 3.30 pm, in the Central One lecture theatre at the Clayton campus.

All faculties and campuses will be represented within the program. The seminar is an ideal way to keep up to date with course, career and admissions information from Monash.

The afternoon sessions consist of a series of optional issues-based workshops that allow participants to tailor their program to suit their interests.

For programs and bookings, contact the Prospective Students Office on (03) 9905 4126.

### Course guide on-line

Monash University's *Undergraduate Course Guide* for the year 2000 is now on the web. This version of the course guide makes navigation and information collection easy. Monash staff and students as well as prospective students are encouraged to visit the site at [www.monash.edu.au/pubs/ugrad/](http://www.monash.edu.au/pubs/ugrad/)

### Year 10 and beyond

A brochure to help Year 10 students select VCE subjects based on course and career interest areas at Monash has been distributed to schools. For a copy, contact the Prospective Students Office on (03) 9905 1320.

### Enhancement studies

A video about the highly successful Enhancement Studies Program at Monash is available for schools.

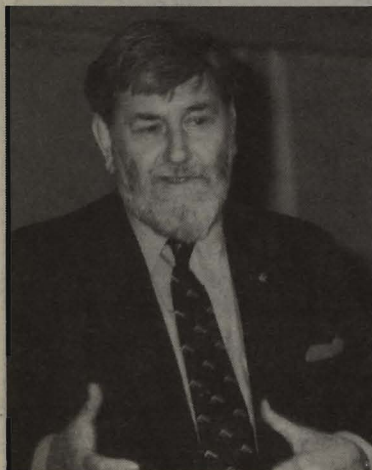
The Enhancement Studies Program offers high-achieving secondary students the opportunity to extend their study options by undertaking a Monash subject in lieu of a sixth VCE study.

The video explains the study options to students. Past students of the program talk about how they handled the workload, how it benefited them and the different study modes available. The video will be shown during the high-achieving students' one-hour workshop for teachers to be held on 17 June at the Clayton campus.

For more information and workshop bookings or to order a copy of the video, contact the Enhancement Studies Program on (03) 9905 5859.

# Weighing up the impact of the information revolution

Australia is an information society, with 40 per cent of its labour force involved in information production, processing, distribution and infrastructure. So why do so many of us feel uneasy about the future, asks Monash Adjunct Professor Barry Jones, AO.



## OPINION

More than one million Australians are users of the Internet. Our time use is dominated by media. These indicators ought to make us a very well-informed, confident society. Right? Well, not exactly. Like Canada, the information revolution in Australia has been accompanied by, and may even have contributed to, a failure of nerve. There is a lack of contextual understanding.

I started to take a serious interest in post-industrialism and the concept of an information society nearly 30 years ago. In 1979 I began writing my book *Sleepers, Wake!*, subtitled *Technology and the Future of Work*.

Published by Oxford University Press in 1982, it is now in its 24th impression. In it I argued that Australia was passing through an information revolution and that information-related work would become by far the largest employment area with the greatest potential for wealth creation. The now common distinction between 'information rich' and 'information poor' appears to be my coinage.

From about 1978 I argued the need for a national information policy to establish a framework for future information issues, at least to ensure access and equity.

At my urging in 1982 the ALP National Conference adopted such a policy as part of its science and technology platform.

The ALP won office in March 1983. I became Minister for Science and Technology and tried to get the Hawke Government to implement the national information policy. No luck. Unfortunately, issues of territoriality, defending the turf, were involved, so the policy remained in the platform but was ignored.

In 1984 Bill Gates made his first visit to Australia and, because he was aware of *Sleepers, Wake!*, asked to see me to talk about information policy.

I tried to arrange for the Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, to meet Bill Gates, but he was too busy. So was the Industry Minister, John Button. The Treasurer, Paul Keating, wasn't interested. Michael Duffy, Communications Minister, was overseas.

Things have changed. In his latest Australian visit, in 1998, Bill Gates was given the status of a head of state, which indeed he is, and addressed the Australian Cabinet. The Deputy Prime Minister then presented him with a stock whip, to show how sophisticated Australians are.

After a series of policy seminars, the Department of Science prepared a

discussion paper, 'A National Information Policy for Australia'. Several departments objected to information being circulated about information. The document was only published in December 1985 after direct intervention by Ministers Button and Duffy.

In April 1990 I ceased to be science minister, and at the 1991 ALP National Conference the national information policy was dropped and has not been restored. No major Australian party has a national information policy.

**The information revolution in Australia has been accompanied by, and may even have contributed to, a failure of nerve.**

After my ministerial defenestration I was appointed chairman of the House of Representatives Standing Committee for Long-term Strategies. The committee's first report, published in May 1991, was titled 'Australia as an Information Society: Grasping New Paradigms'.

We held hearings and tried to persuade all the major stakeholders to clarify where they stood on information policy.

After a very long delay, the report was adopted in principle but effectively pigeonholed. With the change of government in 1996, the Committee for Long Term Strategies was put to sleep.

The report found that all the major stakeholders interpreted 'information' in completely different ways. The Industry department equated 'information' with IT, the hardware, Attorney Generals with intellectual property, patents, copyright and privacy issues,

Communications with telephones, radio, television and program content, the Treasury with statistics, Education with education and training, Arts with the National Library, film and arts funding.

There was no comprehensive overview - only fragmentation. This remains the case. We emphasised the need to distinguish between 'information' (content) and information technology' (IT, hardware and software). They are not synonymous.

In 1999, at last, there is an uneasy feeling in both major parties that we have lost opportunities to face up to policy issues and that time may be running out.

The information or communications revolution has the capacity to transform and expand human capacity to an extraordinary degree. This ought to make us feel happier, more confident of our capacity to transform our lives, to enlarge time-use value.

The reality is not like that at all. Surveys in Canada and Australia indicate a prevailing pessimism in young people. The aged, who ought to welcome the prospect of healthy longevity, are fearful of isolation, loneliness and dependence, although we now have the technological capacity to counteract all three.

Technology intended to free humans up to use our time creatively and imaginatively is threatening to the unemployed, underemployed or uncommitted. 'Free' time then becomes oppressive and has to be 'killed' (or desensitised). The end of much traditional work involving physical effort has threatened many blue-collar workers with a loss of identity. This has a particularly devastating impact in regions where older work forms - mining, for example - have not been replaced by new employment

opportunities and transition to post-industrialism seems unlikely.

This is sometimes compounded by perceived threats - the education revolution, where higher skills are a precondition to employment, the changing role of women in the workforce and society generally, and the challenge of migrants.

**The world wide web is deeply democratic, but also populist, which is not the same thing.**

It is extraordinarily difficult for people to impute an actual value to their own time use. Typically, time-use value is conferred by another, usually an employer. If an employer withdraws it, then our sense of personal value diminishes.

Broadcaster Phillip Adams argued, perceptively, that "the real threat of the communications revolution will not be the homogenisation of cultures but people's desire to be trivial rather than truly national, let alone global. These are not mutually exclusive concepts. Members of local tribes will be able to communicate instantly and comprehensively with like-minded people - members of the same tribe - all over the world! And this may include those who are obsessed with pornography, anti-Semitism, or weaponry".

The world wide web is, of course, deeply democratic, rejecting hierarchies and elites - but also populist, which is not the same thing. What John Howard calls political correctness, and what others called tolerance, did have the effect of filtering out prejudice from mainstream media, other than some talk-back radio outlets. Now prejudice

is institutionalised and doing well - and the Internet plays a part.

Czech President Vaclav Havel has referred to a "loss of transcendence", the decline of an over-arching belief system which makes sense of the contemporary world. This contributes to the rise of cults committed to a conspiratorial or apocalyptic view, with cult members seeing themselves as victims, leading to an absolute commitment to a cause or leader, including - all too often - the use of killing and terror as ideological instruments.

The political process must be revived. This won't just depend on parliament, political parties and voting. It will require a balancing process with countervailing forces and more creative involvement by intermediate bodies, for example, business groups and trade unionists, churches, environmentalists, a fearless judiciary, universities and other research communities, stronger and more diverse media.

Reviving politics will involve encouraging knowledge, curiosity, understanding, scepticism and transparency. It will also require a revolution in education to redefine non-economic values and a critical spirit, with heavier emphasis on history, philosophy and language, as well as the skills needed for vocations.

If this is to happen, universities must play a central, independent and courageous role.

*Professor Barry Jones, AO, is an adjunct professor in the Information Technology faculty at Monash University. For a full version of his inaugural lecture, see [www.fcit.monash.edu.au/BarryJones/BarryJones1.html](http://www.fcit.monash.edu.au/BarryJones/BarryJones1.html)*



Artwork by Elizabeth Dias.

## In support of artistic rights



Researching the artists' cause: Associate Professor Bernard Hoffert. Photo by Andrew Barcham.

BY JOSIE GIBSON

**Like many artists, Bernard Hoffert knows what it feels like to go without in the name of art.**

The associate dean for international and external relations in Monash University's Faculty of Art and Design spent years in different aspects of the arts before moving into academia and art administration.

Unlike many artists, however, Dr Hoffert managed to achieve modest financial success. For the vast majority, the artistic road is paved with economic hardship.

In a recent address to a conference coinciding with the 2nd Asia Art Exhibition in New Delhi, Dr Hoffert emphasised the need for communities to play a greater role in providing artists with freedom through financial security. He also called on artists to honour their responsibilities.

"We're at the end of a century of unprecedented diversity in art activity," he said. "Society appreciates art. We expect it, we enjoy it, we consume it.

But we don't necessarily remunerate the people who produce it very effectively."

Improving the lot of artists around the world is one of Dr Hoffert's long-standing academic interests. He served as world president of the International Association of Art, the UNESCO body which oversees visual arts, for three years in the early 1990s. Recently, he was made honorary president for life of the IAA's Asia-Pacific region, a rare honour. He currently serves as Australia's representative on the IAA's regional governing body.

In Dr Hoffert's view, artists become "free" when society respects what he calls their economic and moral rights.

"Economic rights entitle the person producing art to a reasonable sort of livelihood compared with other workers in their society," he says. "Moral rights relate to creative aspects of art production such as copyright."

Unfortunately, even in developed countries it is not uncommon for art works to be reproduced without artists' permission, or their images destroyed or manipulated for commercial gain.

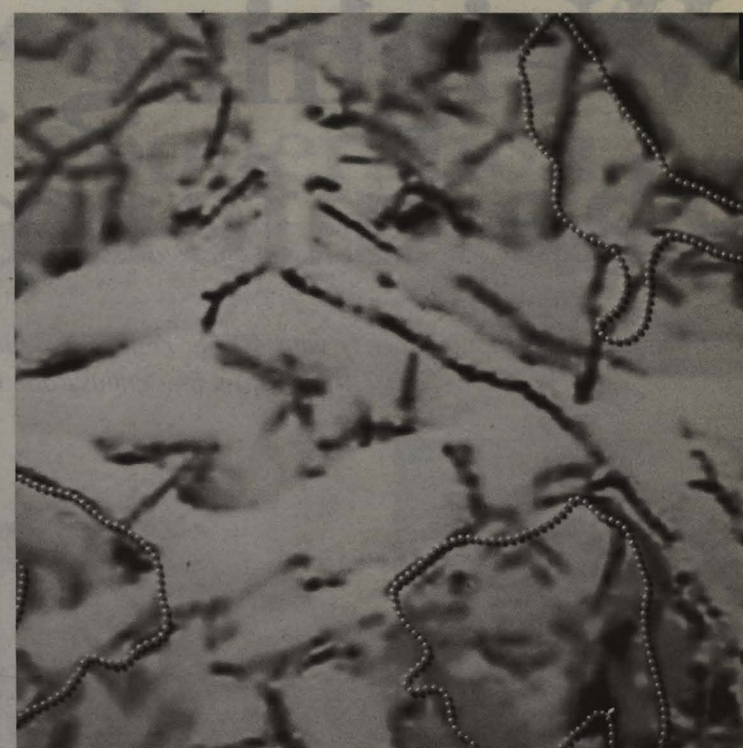
And unlike writers, few artists receive resale fees when their work is on-sold for increasingly higher amounts.

"The economic benefit goes to the person who owns the art work rather than to the person who created it," says Dr Hoffert. "It seems morally unreasonable that the person who gave the work its value should not be entitled to some reward."

During numerous overseas travels, he has seen a number of systems worth considering, such as art collection agencies which enforce copyright and collect copyright and other fees on behalf of artists.

However, Dr Hoffert also argues that in return for such economic support, artists should give something back to the communities in which they work.

"The principle that artists are free is fundamental, but they don't always respect that freedom," he said. "Freedom entails a responsibility to utilise it effectively, to feed back into society, to critique culture. That's an important function of art."



'The idea of visible', one of the works in Natural Disasters/Disasters Unnatural, an exhibition of work from the 1860s to the present which explores the strange and disastrous in natural and social environments. It's on at the Monash University Gallery at Clayton campus until 3 July. For details, call (03) 9905 4217. Photo courtesy of the artist.

## ARTS BRIEFS

### Staff works on display at Switchback

Artistic creations by staff from the Monash Gippsland Centre for Art and Design went on display at the Switchback Gallery during May.

*Art at the Centre* featured works by 10 artists, from painting and sculpture to photography, printmaking, ceramics and installation art.

### All aboard for some sculptural treats

Sculpture by Art and Design students from Monash University is on show at Melbourne's Spencer and Flinders Street Stations until 10 June.

*Incision* brings together work by 19 third-year honours and masters students from the Sculpture department in

two unusual venues – the Spencer Street–Little Collins station walkway and Flinders Street Station walkway via Degraes.

The show is a project of the City of Melbourne's Public Art Program Platform Artists Group.

### First exhibition for Caulfield gallery

Melbourne painter Glyn De Williams has become the first artist to have his work displayed in the gallery of the new Art and Design building at Caulfield campus.

*Glyn De Williams: Retrospective 1973–1999* traces the painter's artistic development over more than 20 years, including a stint in a Paris studio.

De Williams is a lecturer in fine art and painting at Monash.

## Exhibition provides taste of aero-zone

The work of Australian artist Rosemary Laing is being showcased internationally in a cultural exchange involving Monash University Gallery and the National Museum of Art, Osaka.

Curated by Natalie King, *aero-zone* comprises works from several series by the Sydney-based artist, brought together for the first time in Osaka until July. On its return to Australia, *aero-zone* will be shown at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art in Melbourne.

Laing's work is considered highly relevant to Japanese audiences in the way it questions people's understanding and perceptions of landscape, space and distance through technological interventions.

A finalist in the Contemporary Visual Arts Prize, Laing has held several solo exhibitions throughout Australia and has shown at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb, the Power Plant in Toronto and the Istanbul Biennial.



'brownwork #9' (1997), an abseiler inside a 747 freighter jet. Courtesy of the artist and Gitte Weise Gallery, Sydney.

*aero-zone* comprises selected works from three different series. 'Brownwork' features photographs taken at Sydney airport and includes events staged by Laing for the camera: a javelin thrower or a rock climber or a

child playing ball inside the cargo holds of various aircraft.

In 'Greenwork', Laing has worked with Sydney landscape photographer Peter Elliston, digitising his photographs of lush green landscapes,

stretching and blurring the pixels to illustrate the impact of technology on nature.

The third work, 'Spin', has premiered in Osaka. A multiple monitor video installation, it presents footage

taken from the wing of an aerobatic plane during manoeuvres over the Blue Mountains. Watching the plane plummet and spin is a disorienting experience, and, like most of Laing's images, is meant to enable viewers to reflect upon conventional notions of space and time.

*aero-zone* is an official event in Reaching the World, an international festival of Australian culture, the third Olympic festival in the lead-up to the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. It builds on existing sister-city relations between Melbourne and Osaka.

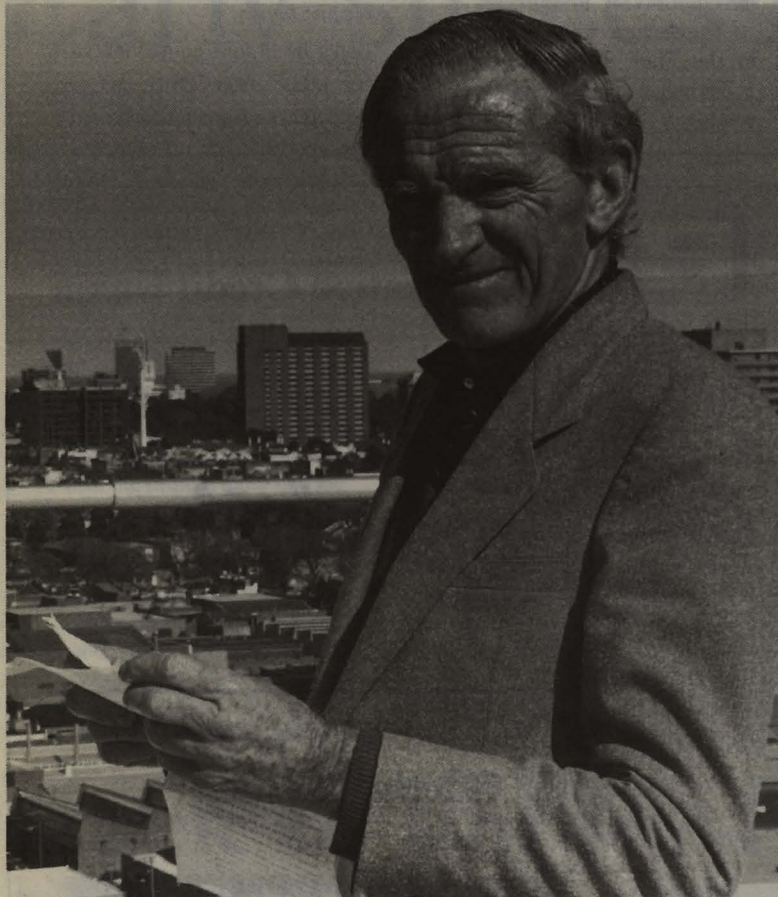
**What:** *aero-zone*

**Where:** National Museum of Art, Osaka, and the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne

**When:** 27 May to 11 July (Osaka); 21 August to 3 October (Melbourne)

**Who:** For details, contact the Monash University Gallery on (03) 9905 4217.

# Gathering the pieces of a life of glory



Author Frank Hardy is the subject of a new book by Dr Jenny Hocking.

BY DEREK BROWN

A Monash academic is using interviews, letters and recently released ASIO files to piece together a biography of Frank Hardy, one of the most controversial Australian writers of this century.

Dr Jenny Hocking, a senior lecturer in the National Centre for Australian Studies, has received an ARC QEII fellowship to complete the biography and will spend the next five years collating memoirs of Hardy's life.

Born in 1917, Hardy left school at 13 to work as a casual labourer and became a member of the Communist Party in 1939. According to Dr Hocking, Hardy's novels, many of which have become modern classics, acted as vehicles for his political beliefs.

"Meeting Hardy during the mid-1980s, I was struck by how passionate he was about his writing and his politics," she said.

*Power Without Glory*, one of Hardy's most contentious works, recounts the life of a fictional character, John West, whose pursuit of wealth and power is used to show the corruption inherent in capitalism.

When the novel was released, it was claimed that Hardy based his main character on John Wren, a self-made millionaire of the time. In 1951, Hardy was sued for criminal libel by Wren's wife, Ellen, but was found not guilty.

"*Power Without Glory* was, and still is, a very popular book, but the critics at the time claimed it was formulaic, crude and overly political. It is only recently that we have been able to look beyond the politics to see the value of his work in a literary sense," Dr Hocking said.

By the time of his death in 1994, Hardy had published short stories, presented radio programs, written plays, and authored more than 22 books.



Dr Jenny Hocking.

"He had a great story-telling ability, liked to spin a yarn and wrote tall stories about Australian battlers. It is reported that he died at his writing desk with a racing guide in his hand. Even if it isn't true, Hardy would have wanted people to believe it was," Dr Hocking said.

*Frank Hardy: A Political Life* will be Dr Hocking's second biography and her third book. Her first biography, *Lionel Murphy: A Political Biography*, was printed in 1997 and was shortlisted for the South Australian National Festival Awards for Literature, Best Non-Fiction, in 1998.

Dr Hocking said she was attracted to biography as it allowed her to look at a whole span of cultural and political life in Australia at a particular time, using the life of an individual as a focus.

"With my first biography, I was able to explore Australian politics and changes within the Labor Party through Murphy's life. I would like to achieve the same kind of depth with the Hardy biography," she said.

## What's on

A round-up of events and activities around Monash campuses

### June

**Monash University Gallery exhibition** - *Natural disasters/disasters unnatural*, an exhibition exploring the theme of the disastrous and the traumatic in natural and personal environments. Monash University Gallery (building 55), Clayton. Until 3 July, Tuesdays to Fridays, 10 am to 5 pm, and Saturdays, 2 pm to 5 pm.

**Monash Science Centre exhibition** - *Ghosts of the Great Russian Dinosaurs*, a display of Russian dinosaurs cast from collections of the Palaeontological Institute in Moscow. Showing at Deakin University, building E, Rusden campus, Clayton. Until 31 October. Open Sundays, 11 am to 5 pm.

**10 Southeast Asian studies seminar** - 'The film-making and poli-

tics of Norodom Sihanouk', by Eliza Romey, Language and Learning Centre, Monash University. Room SG03, building 11, Clayton, 11.15 am.

**11 Making Music Series** - 'Monash Sinfonia Chamber Orchestra 1999 Vietnam/Malaysia tour farewell concert'. Monash Sinfonia performs a program of works for an intimate orchestra, conducted by Andre de Quadros. Tickets: \$12 (\$10 concession). Music Auditorium, Clayton, 6 pm. Bookings: (03) 9905 1111.

**23 Making Music Series** - 'New Monash Orchestra 1999 Vietnam/Malaysia tour farewell concert'. The New Monash Orchestra presents the program for their inaugural international tour, conducted by Andre de Quadros with soloist Jonathon Bradley on piano. Tickets: \$15

(\$12 concession). Robert Blackwood Hall, Clayton, 8 pm. Bookings: (03) 9905 1111.

**24 Industrial Relations conference** - 'Workplace equity in the new millennium', a conference held by the National Key Centre in Industrial Relations, will feature a range of speakers from government and industry. Registration: \$250. Hotel Sofitel, Collins Street, Melbourne. Inquiries: (03) 9903 8700.

**31 Accident Research Centre seminar** - 'Challenges in applying analytic epidemiology to injury prevention research', by Professor Robyn Norton, Institute for International Health Research and Development, University of Sydney. RACV conference room 101, first floor, building 70, Clayton. 1 pm.



### A Furious Hunger: America in the 21st Century

Bruce Grant  
Melbourne University Press  
(RRP \$24.95)

Most of the world needs America - at the very least, none can afford to ignore it. But what makes the US so powerful? And will the last remaining superpower survive into the 21st century?

In an attempt to provide some answers, Bruce Grant, a professor in Monash University's Department of Management, has compiled the results of more than 30 years of observation of the character of America and its people in his work, *A Furious Hunger*.

Through the eyes of an Australian outsider, we are offered a fresh understanding of what drives the United States. The Clinton presidency, the legacy of slavery and the emergence of film and jazz are all explored, peeling back layers of the American dream to reveal the practical workings of the nation and its people.

According to Professor Grant, Americans are confused about who they are and what their future role in the world will be during the next millennium. *A Furious Hunger* provides some interesting possibilities.

Professor Grant is a distinguished analyst of international affairs. He has been a foreign correspondent, a newspaper columnist, an ambassador and an adviser to governments. He now teaches statecraft at Monash University.

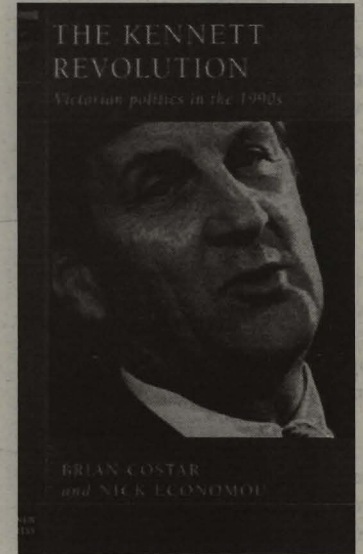
### The Kennett Revolution:

Victorian Politics in the 1990s

Edited by Brian Costar and Nick Economou  
UNSW Press (RRP \$24.95)

Over the past six years, the Kennett government has introduced sweeping changes across Victoria as part of a radical program including downsizing, deregulation and privatisation. With control of both houses of State Parliament, the government has been able to implement its policies virtually unimpeded.

Written by 20 expert contributors, *The Kennett Revolution* looks at the impact of these changes, focusing on



areas such as the economy, health, the environment, law and order, industrial relations and education.

Various chapters analyse the ideological basis for the Liberal Government policies, the dynamic differences in policy compared to its Labor predecessors and the sometimes authoritarian tendencies displayed by the government - particularly in response to criticism.

The editors, Professor Brian Costar and Dr Nick Economou from the Politics department at Monash University, are frequent commentators on political issues on ABC radio. Brian Costar was also co-editor of *Trials in Power*, a review of the performance of the Cain and Kirner governments in Victoria.

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

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

## Spend now and save later

Continued from page 3

Professor Dixon said there was no evidence to support that argument. He subsequently conducted six additional 'sensitivity simulations' using the Monash Model to assess variations on assumptions concerning the labor market, exports of tourism and education services, packaged holidays to Australia, trade-offs between food tax exemption and income tax cuts, and the rates at which changes in indirect taxes are passed on.

The results reinforced the findings of his December paper - that the GST would have little effect on Australia's long-term macro-economic performance.

Speaking after the Budget breakfast, Professor Dixon said the Budget has only reinforced his case. Its forecasts did not rely on the passage of a GST, since the government had planned to introduce it in July next year.

"It seems to me that if the GST doesn't get up, we'll know in plenty of time to reconfigure it. I don't think this Budget should be viewed as depending on the passage of the GST in any way."

On the positive side, he said, the changes encouraging people to take up private health insurance were "interesting and sensible".

"I think the 2 per cent for each year is not a very big penalty. I don't think it's quite enough to do the job. It remains to be seen."

# New AUS chief wants to give students a sporting chance



As a sportsman himself, new AUS head Mr John White doesn't mind being in the thick of things. Photo by Greg Ford.

BY JOSIE GIBSON

## Pick a sporting fixture around Monash University and one figure is never far from the action.

For Caulfield and Peninsula campus director Mr John White, sport is a lifestyle rather than a nine-to-five commitment.

The new president of Australian University Sport is a self-confessed sports buff - former player (301 games for the Christian Brothers College Old Boys), runner, coach, president and administrator ("Carn the Ashers!").

Part of his brief as adviser on sport to Monash vice-chancellor Professor David Robinson is to extend the already considerable reach of sporting and leisure activities to all Monash campuses.

Mr White is tackling the goal with customary energy. "We're moving slowly," he says. "We've recognised that there is scope for additional facilities at the other campuses. The university has advanced a fair way in communicating

and educating people about the many opportunities already available."

On top of the already heavy workload of administering two Monash campuses and promoting Monash sporting life comes the presidency of AUS, Australia's peak university sporting body.

The job, says Mr White, came out of left field. He had been drawn into a major role in organising the highly successful Australian University Games last year, which were co-hosted by Monash and the University of Melbourne.

"At the end of the games, someone asked if I would be interested in the presidency of Australian University Sport," he recalls.

Elected unopposed at the end of March, Mr White's goals as AUS head are not dissimilar to those of his Monash role: to promote and extend the reach of sport throughout Australia's university community. And that means to staff - from vice-chancellors down - as well as to students.

"Sport is central to achieving a diverse culture at the university campus level," he says.

"It adds that extra dimension to study and provides students with valuable experiences that can't be obtained in a lecture theatre. It's great that Monash's vice-chancellor is a strong supporter of sport - recently he provided financial assistance to the outstanding Monash netball team to enable them to cross the Tasman and conquer all at the NZ University Games."

Mr White says AUS has been pushing to have major university competitions such as the Australian University Games recognised as part of Australian sporting bodies' performance accreditation systems. Australia is sending a team of some 150 athletes and officials to the World University Games in Spain in July. From among the top performers, hopefully, will come a handful of Australian athletes with an eye on the 2000 Olympics.

## Beazley to deliver APEC lecture

The Leader of the Opposition, Mr Kim Beazley, will deliver the inaugural Monash APEC lecture later this month.

Mr Beazley will speak on the 'Asia-Pacific in the New Millennium' at the free public lecture, to be held in Melbourne on Friday 18 June.

The lecture will be opened by Monash vice-chancellor Professor David Robinson and chaired by Mr Hugh Morgan, AO, managing director of WMC Resources.

The lecture will start at 6 pm in the Shell Theatre, level 2, 1 Spring Street, Melbourne. To reserve a seat, contact Ms Jackie



The Leader of the Opposition, Mr Kim Beazley.

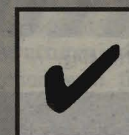
Taylor by 15 June on (03) 9903 8757, fax (03) 9903 8813 or email Jackie.Taylor@arts.monash.edu.au



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# Chasing Majorca gold

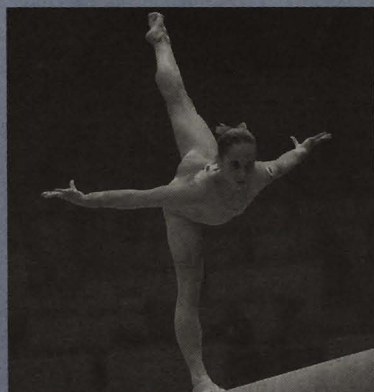
BY COREY NASSAU

If self-made Majorcan resident and Australian fugitive 'Senor' Christopher Skase can hold his questionable health together, he might just make it along to see some of the top-class sporting action on offer at this year's World University Games.

More than 5000 university students from 120 countries will converge on the island of Palma de Majorca in Spain in July to compete for gold across 12 sports including athletics, swimming, gymnastics, judo and basketball.

The World University Games are the second-largest international athletics event in the world - twice as large as the Winter Olympics, bigger than the Commonwealth Games and smaller only than the Summer Olympics.

Among the competing athletes at this year's games will be two Monash students, Joanna Hughes, an Olympic gymnast, and Edward Roche, an Australian Institute of Sport swimmer. Both are also



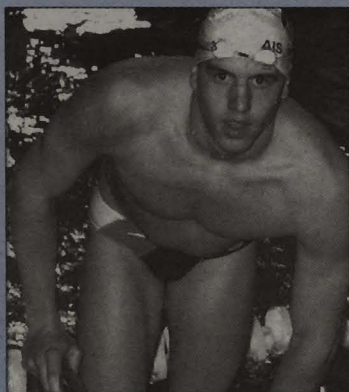
Olympic gymnast Joanna Hughes.

hoping to have some fun and enjoy a little Spanish sunshine.

An arts student, Joanna, 21, last competed at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics and only recently returned to training after a rest from the pressure of elite competition. She said returning to gymnastics after such a break had not been easy.

"It was as if I was starting from scratch, but I finally feel like I'm getting back into form and am looking forward to competing again."

In swimming, the standard is expected to be world-class, but for Edward Roche, a deferred business and economics student, swimming



AIS swimmer Edward Roche.

with the best will not be anything new. The backstroke and fly swimmer is currently training at the Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra in a squad with some "fairly decent" swimmers.

"I'm in a squad with Alex Popov, Michael Klim, Sarah Ryan and Matthew Dunn, so hopefully some of that talent has rubbed off on me," Edward said.

The World University Games will run from 3 to 13 July. For more information, contact Sports and Recreation Association director Mr John Campbell on (03) 9905 4100.

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