Coroners' data goes on-line

By David Bruce

The task of reducing preventable deaths and injuries across Australia has been given a boost with the launch of a national project to establish an online database of coronial investigations.

The project, known as the National Coroners' Information System (NCIS), will be the most advanced and accessible repository of data on the causes of deaths in the world, providing a wealth of information to coroners and policymakers as well as the health and law sectors.

The NCIS is an initiative of the newly established Monash University National Centre for Coronial Information - a consortium of the university's Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine, Accident Research Centre and Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine.

According to Professor Stephen Corbett, who is professor of forensic medicine at Monash and director of the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine, coronial reports on sudden and unexpected deaths contain a wealth of information which can be utilised by the community to prevent similar deaths or injuries. But until now, he says, this potential has been restricted by the absence of a systematic collection of coronial information.

"Many people assume that this type of system is already in place, but there is no country in the world that has it. Victoria has a very good state database, but the challenge now is to create a national database. In some states, particularly in rural areas, there is still paper-based record keeping."

"Ultimately, the NCIS will allow all coroners across Australia to have up-to-date information on their computer screens on coroners' findings as well as autopsy, toxicology and related police and forensic reports."

"According to Professor Corbett, such a system has been mooted for some time. In August 1992, the then prime minister Bob Hawke announced the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody be cited 45 such deaths. By the time the Royal Commission began sitting the following year after a period of gathering of evidence, the number of deaths to be examined had increased to 100.

"If the prime minister of Australia was not able to state correctly the number of deaths to within 100 per cent, then this indicates just how appalling the situation was," said Professor Corbett.

"The situation has improved slightly since then, but it is still very difficult to find national data on most causes of death. We can gather the raw figures, but other relevant data, for example where the person died, when they died, and how they died is very poor."

"Each of this type of information contributes to the formulation of public policy in areas that cover incidents such as workplace deaths, drug deaths, suicides or femicides.

"The establishment of the NCIS is a reflection of change in the role of the coroner, which was traditionally limited to investigating single cases of sudden and unexpected death," explained Professor Corbett. "Coroners are adopting the view that they can also contribute to the prevention of deaths and accidents. This is a real opening up of the coronial mindset into the area of epidemiology and injury prevention."

"Monash University and the Victorian Department of Justice have each contributed $160,000 towards the project, and the Federal Department of Health and Aged Care has contributed $550,000 towards developing the system. A phased introduction of states has begun, with NSW expected to go online within a few months."

Season's greetings

The people and the achievements that have made the pages of Monash News in 1999 highlight our fundamental obligation in a university to participate in the life of the broader community.

Monash must communicate in a regular way - with schools, businesses, government and the communities around our seven campuses - about the work that we do.

That is why Monash News was started at the beginning of this year.

This publication reports the achievements and views of Monash people. I hope you have enjoyed reading about some of what we do well.

It has been a challenging but ultimately rewarding year for staff and students at Monash. I look to 1999 with much promise.

I wish you a very happy and relaxed break.

Professor David Robinson

Vice-Chancellor and President

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Indonesia's economic and political crisis has revived its critical contemporary theatre scene.
Social aspects vital in uni success

BY KAT ANSELL

Sometimes sheer loneliness drives first-year students off campuses, a Monash lecturer told a recent conference.

School-leavers who have trouble adjusting to tertiary study are unlikely to recall for second year, said Dr Terry Kantaris. Part of the high dropout rate was due to the problems some school leavers had in making friends after leaving the security of secondary school.

Ms Kantaris has been investigating how a successful social transition from school can affect academic success at university. She presented the findings of a study to the Tackling the Transition Conference held at Monash from 8 to 9 December.

There were many ways to help school leavers adapt successfully to university life, said Ms Kantaris, a Faculty of Education lecturer and transition researcher.

Marine focus in summer school

BY JUERI RIAN

The marine diversity of Australia's southern shores will be the focus of an intensive two-week summer school at Monash's Peninsula campus in January.

Faculty of Education lecturer, marine educator and course promoter Mr Harry Brethol would say the summer school was aimed largely at primary and secondary school teachers who wished to develop an awareness and gain a better understanding of marine life in Victoria.

Mr Brethol said it was also relevant for students who were undertaking marine qualification.

"The coastal area in southern Australia, extending from Port Phillip Bay to Tasmania, contains some of the most fascinating, unique and diverse marine life in the world," he explained.

"There are species in these two waters that are not even found in other parts of the world."

He believed the marine environment could be used in the classroom as an activity of social, environmental, economical and biological issues.

"Not only is Australia's marine environment diverse, in educational terms it can be used to explain and explain the issues the effects of introduced species, pollution, conservation, basic biology and the economics of coastal development," he said.

And while Mr Brethol would like to spread the whole two weeks of the program exploring the coastal waters, he said that in teaching terms it was not practical.

"School teachers are lucky if they get their students down to the beach area for an excursion, so the program needs to focus around activities that translate well in the classroom," he said.

However, at least one day of the program will be dedicated to a field trip, and an aquarium will be set up for the program where local invertebrates like crabs, sea stars and starfish will reside for the duration.

Rhodes honour for Monash student

BY DAVID BRUCE

Monash science and law student Sanya Smith caught the attention of the Victorian Rhodes Scholarship selection committee with her ambition to undertake research into malaria in developing countries.

"She, 25, is currently studying towards an honours degree in scienee and law, was named this year's Victorian Rhodes Scholar and will leave for a year of study at Oxford University in October."

"It's very exciting and it opens the way for others like me," she said, after hearing of her Rhodes success.

The prestigious annual prize is awarded to young scholars who demonstrate high intellectual academic ability as well as an interest and involvement in the community, leadership qualities and sporting achievements.

Mr Brethol would like to develop a holiday kit to help families visiting coastal areas explore and recognise some of the more common marine wildlife.

With some imagination and a little practicality, the program could be taken "school" to rural schools not located near coastal regions.

"The Marine Education Society of Australia, which supports this program through its national Coast and Marine Studies Program, has recently run similar teacher education programs at4oane and Wilson's Promontory," Mr Brethol said.

And one of the biggest complaints is that the programs are focused around coastal areas.

"Mr Brethol said there were also plenty of opportunities to explore the unique and fascinating marine whilele Australian coastal areas had to offer in a less structured environment.

"You need to spend time in a university to appreciate life and culture - if you just drop in for ten weeks and lectures and need to rush off immediately to your part-time job, you'll neither appreciate what it is all about nor get the most out of the experience."

She said it was important for students to know that when things were not going well, there were people on campus to help. "But it is up to the students themselves to seek out this help - university is not like school, where teachers are able to left from the look on your face, because they know you so well, that something is wrong."

Although researches often say with many strategies to assist first-year students, she said, it was important for university teaching staff to remember that a little care and attention - the human touch - goes a long way towards helping students adjust to their first year at university.

Dr Mark Peel, transition coordinator at Monash University, said the conference had built on the knowledge gained since the first transition conference at Monash in 1995. Current

"The findings of the conference have confirmed that there was no single model or template that would suit all students. Universities need to be free to experiment to find the best solutions, he said, and Monash University's approach was firmly based on listening to students, trialling new programs and responding in positive ways to the findings.
Focus on industry strengths: report

By JULE PIAA

Melbourne needs to face the tough challenge of competing on a global level with Sydney's core business activities, according to the author of an annual report on Melbourne's growth patterns.

"Monash University, a key player in the city's commercial and industrial development, is well placed to identify industries that fit with the city's strengths," writes Professor Barry Cuningham, author of the report, "and to help guide Melbourne's economic development.

The report suggests that the city's economy should focus on industries that are growing in the global market, such as information technology, biotechnology, and renewable energy. It also recommends investing in education and training to ensure the city has a skilled workforce to support these industries.

New university chancellor

Monash University has enlisted the services of one of Australia's most influential and respected business leaders to guide it into the millennium.

Mr Jerry Ellis, the current chairman of BHP, will start his three-year term as university chancellor on 1 March 1998. The University Senate announcement follows the retirement of Mr Bill Rogers, Monash's chancellor since 1991.

"Mr Ellis has a clear understanding of the challenges facing the institution and the opportunities for growth," said Vice-Chancellor Professor David Roberts. "He brings a wealth of experience and wisdom to the role, and will be a great asset to Monash University.

Award thrill for our top teacher

For Monash lecturer Ms Angela Carson, winning the Prime Minister's Award for the 1998 University Teacher of the Year was something of a shock. "Ms Carson recalls that she was in two minds about even applying for the award, which was announced on 23 November by the Federal Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Dr David Kemp.

"I didn't want to waste time preparing another teaching dossier," she explained. "I had to work on my PhD and I was preparing for a promotion interview." As the deadline approached, however, she changed her mind. "It hit me that it could be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," she said.

When her name was read out as the winner, she was stunned. "After what seemed like five minutes, I managed to collect what few thoughts I had and walked up onto the stage to accept the award.

Dr Kemp praised Ms Carson for her fresh teaching approaches, saying her novel use of multimedia teaching methods sparked her from a highly competitive field. Two other Monash staff members were also finalists: lecturer Dr John Langham for education and senior lecturer Ms Adrian Evans for law and legal studies.

Gaming law changes urged

The Springingle Legal Service (SLS) has called for urgent changes to the laws regulating Victoria's casinos and gaming industry in a bid to tackle problem gambling.

"The current regulatory framework does not adequately address the growing problem of gambling addiction," argued SLS director David Carbone. "We need to review the laws to ensure they are effective in protecting vulnerable people and the broader community.

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Mr Jerry Ellis.

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New dean of law at Monash

Monash University has appointed Professor Stephen Parker as new dean of the Faculty of Law.

Professor Parker, currently professor of law at Griffith University, will take up his role at Monash in late February.

A former dean of Griffith's law faculty, he has a national reputation as a researcher in and public commentator on legal ethics, legal aid and family law, as well as matters concerning the judiciary.

Professor Parker's commitment to the public accountability of the legal and academic communities is evident in his involvement with the Committee of Australian Law Deans and the Judicial Conference of Australia, a body representing judges and registrars.

"The Monash law school prepares people for a changing world, and I am very excited about my appointment," he said. "Its curriculum is modern and innovative. It recognizes that while there are multiple careers in law, all graduates must have a strong sense of social and professional responsibility."

Greater debate urged

Australia should promote wider public debate about related social goals to ensure social cohesion is maintained, according to former Labor Government minister Mr John Button.

Mr Button, a special advisor to Monash University's vice-chancellor, urged action to address the decline of cultural, educational and ideological institutions and the loss of a sense of community.

"We could attempt to address some of the ideas languishing in the back burner," he said in the recent inaugural Monash Berwick Public Lecture.

Speaking on the topic, "The recession into public life," Mr Button expressed concern about the quality of contemporary public policy-making and the limited participation in a lot of public debate.

He also criticized the emphasis on ideology and the "prevailing economic orthodoxy".

Healthy travel promoted

Healthy travel promoted

A group of third-year medical students from Monash University has set out to reveal the health hazards involved in overseas travel.

The five students, working as part of the medical school's medicine course, have been touring the region to promote awareness of travelers' health.

They have been working with local travel agents to produce a poster and pamphlets promoting awareness of travelers' health.

The students worked closely with the Travellers' Medical and Vaccination Centre and found that 94 per cent of travel agents viewed travelers' health as an important issue but were uncertain how to address it.

Ms Un said the group suggested that travel agents needed to be more active in their promotion of travelers' health, and that travelers needed to visit a doctor before departure to avoid what in many cases were preventable illnesses.

"Different travelers had different needs," Ms Un said. "So our conclusion was that people promoting travel health should come up with context-specific pamphlets relevant to all travelers going to that place."
The humanities in hard times

There can be no doubt that the humanities are in hard times. The retreat of governments from the funding of institutions functioning for the public good - hospitals, libraries, universities - is a world-wide phenomenon which shows no sign of abating, writes Marian Quail.

OPINION

In Australia, government cutbacks on higher education represent about 1.7 per cent of the domestic product in 1975, compared with about 1 per cent today, and the rate of decline is increasing rapidly. Within universities, faculties teaching the humanities have been the first to feel the pain. In Australia, this is partly due to the way in which faculties have been funded. Unlike the health, science, medicine and engineering, arts faculties spend more than 60 to 90 per cent - on the salaries of permanent staff. When funds are cut, they human equipment budgets and short-term stalling to save; the burden falls immediately upon teaching programs. The results have been disastrous. The recent Discipline Surveys carried out by the academics of the Humanities and of the Social Sciences present statistics demonstrating that staff-student ratios have shot up between 1990 and 1996; from about 16.5 to 18.5 students per staff member in the humanities, and from 10 to 20 in the social sciences. Faculties all over the country are losing staff members, as well as the programs which they teach. Well-paid local examples include Greek, at Deakin, music at La Trobe and classics at Monash. Language programs are also disappearing from institutions, from cities, and in a few cases - like that of Hindi from Macquarie.

Clearly, this is not just a question of how the funds fall. Planning decisions by university administrators are not kind to the humanities. Education in a discipline is said to offer two things of great value: Students discover that knowledge is contingent; knowledge, constantly remains to be defined; discipline cannot compete with business and technology; the arts are not for business; the language of corporations - students as clients, teaching programs as product, universities as international exporters - brings with it an administrative culture which seems inherently hostile to the humanities project.

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Planning decisions by university administrators are not kind to the humanities.

Finding the gems amongst the pebbles

By Josie Gibson

A new book and CD package developed by a Monash expert is aimed at helping teachers and students navigate their way through a wealth of potential resources on the Internet.

Virtual Language Learning: Finding the Gems Amongst the Pebbles was launched in early December but was selling well even before publication, according to its author and director of Monash Language Centre Associate Professor Ursula Felix.

"The web is a treasure trove of resources, but it's also bewilderingly complex," Dr Felix said. "If its potential is to be tapped, some guidance is required - not only about what is there but also how it can be used."

Virtual Language Learning follows six months of intensive research in which Dr Felix and her team combed hundreds of Internet sites for those which could be of use in learning and teaching languages.

The result is a unique resource which offers a combination of useful examples and language-specific technical information for language teachers, formal and informal students, and people simply interested in the delivery of language courses on the Net.

"Besides the sheer bulk of sites to sift through, one of the more challenging tasks in the compiling Virtual Language Learning was keeping abreast of constantly changing URLs or web site addresses."

According to Dr Felix, some languages required less research than others. Many European languages, for example, were already well established on the Internet so it was not necessary to "reinvent the wheel". Digging out useful sites for less popular languages sometimes proved more difficult.

"The book includes references to languages as well as to techniques," Dr Felix said. "Readers will be able to look up the applied linguistic literature - try out a site in several languages, and read about how it works technically."

A practicing language teacher who has oversen the development of a number of language-specific Internet sites, Dr Felix knows how confusing and time-consuming the technology can prove.

"I would have killed for this book three years ago when we started doing online sites on the web," she said.

Virtual Language Learning: Finding the Gems Amongst the Pebbles is available from Language Australia Ltd, GPO Box 3729F, Melbourne, Victoria 3001 (fax (03) 8265 4709). It is priced at $55, plus postage and handling.
Indonesia's new drama: beyond the crisis

By Brenda Haaken

As the world media spotlight remains fixed on civil unrest in strife-torn Indonesia, another drama is unfolding away from the hotspots of violence and public disorder.

The director of Monash University's Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, Dr Barbara Hatley, said Indonesians 'sleeping economic and political crisis had revaled its critical contemporary theatre scene.'

She said these critical forms of theatre were emerging as an alternative to the Soeharto regime - a regime currently being portrayed in Indonesia as a significant voice for political and cultural expression.

"In an ironic way, the extraordinary difficulties occurring in Indonesia in its struggle for democracy have given the arts a renewed focus and of hope, as the nation is thinking about enormous social change, how to construct its values, and how to build itself into a democratic society.

Dr Hatley said the new focus on the arts was important because it offered an alternative to the violence and frustration currently being played out on Indonesia's streets by rioters demanding political change.

"It is another outlet for Indonesian people to vent their anger. As an alternative to throwing rocks at the police or attacking community groups, theatre artists are helping that the arts can operate like a safety valve.

Dr Hatley said performers were exploring issues as diverse as human rights, the law, government and corruption - issues which could only be addressed obliquely under the repressive Soeharto regime.

The arts also provided a creative arena for addressing major questions now confronting Indonesians, such as how their society should change and how they will define their identity. For example, the issue of violence against women and the need for change in gender relations is a focus of performance events around Indonesia this month.

For performers, explicit concerns of their work include issues such as what sort of language should be spoken, how people should relate to authority figures and what sort of political/democratic structures should be set in place.

Dr Hatley said Indonesia's critical contemporary theatre could be generally classified in two categories: humour/satirical and dark, and dark, abstract, absurd.

Prior to the post-Soeharto revival, she said, this type of theatre was largely non mainstream and had been at its most innovative, critical and politically daring in the 1970s.

"In the early 1970s, at the beginning of the New Order period, critical theatre artists were part of a significant social and cultural movement," she said. "But by the 1980s, their creativity was largely frustrated by political and economic conditions.

Dr Hatley has been tracking the progress of several theatrical groups in the early 1970s, critical theatre artists were part of a significant social and cultural movement in Indonesia, according to Dr Barbara Hatley (above left).

Art for impact's sake

A new exhibition by Monash art students is aimed at highlighting the diversity of artistic expression in the university community.

Impact: Art for a World Identity showcases the work of 25 undergraduate and postgraduate students from the Faculty of Art and Design.

According to exhibition curator Malcolm Bywaters, Impact reflects the beliefs, aspirations and issues that are relevant to a new generation of artists.

"It is an exhibition of diversity and serious intellectual intent - one which demonstrates the talent, dedication and commitment of Monash art students and staff in the development of visual culture," he said.

Bywaters, who is also a lecturer in the Fine Arts department, said the exhibitors were chosen from more than 100 applicants from across the university's visual arts spectrum, with works ranging from painting and sculpture to ceramics, video, metal and jewellery.

Impact was officially opened on 4 December by the Federal Minister for the Arts and the Centenary of Federation, Mr Peter McGauran.

Sculpture symposium

Creating a work of art in the courtyard of a count's castle might sound like a fairytale, but for Gippsland sculptor Eva Velcy, the fairytaele became a reality.

A visual arts graduate from Monash Gippsland, Volcy (right) was one of only six international sculptors invited to the seventh annual Wood Sculpture Symposium, joining a small team of sculptors in the Czech town of Zdar to create a permanent exhibition for the town's historic arts centre.

The sculptures were presented with a small stipend as well as accommodation, wood and working space in the centre of a local count's castle, where the emblazoning chairma by and indusitability drew streams of interested onlookers each day.

Volcy's piece, 'Balsa' (table), (below right) rises neatly four metres from a spectacular site at the confluence of two rivers, sporting male and female symbols and painted in-eye-catching desert colours.

"There's a postmodern primitive streak in my work," the Czech-born artist explained. "For modelled my work in African carvings for years - not taking their shapes but adapting their philosophy I concentrate on bridging gaps between cultures.

A former schoolteacher, Volcy turned full-time sculptor some years ago and now has works in a number of art collections, including Monash Gippsland.

For Volcy, the Zdar symposium has left a lasting impression in artistic terms as well as in the camaraderie created between fellow artists.

Banksia artworks touring Victoria

A selection of original banksia watercolours by Monash University artist Celia Rosser has gone on tour in regional Victoria. The watercolours, part of the Monash University Collection, are being shown at four regional art galleries over the next year.

The works are from the first two volumes of Rosser's botanical illustrations of the complete species. She is due to complete volume three and the entire 76 varieties of banksia by mid-1999.

The life-sized watercolours are drawn from specimen the artist has collected from native habitats around Australia and are the basis for the print run reproductions. The Banksia. Rosser's work has attracted much acclaim, the watercolours having been exhibited at botanical gardens in Australia and at London's famous Kew Gardens. Rosser has been awarded the Jill Smythes Award for Botanical Illustration from The Linnean Society of London and the Medal of the Order of Australia for her work.

The exhibition will demonstrate the artistic process, from studio pencil rough to scientifically verified painting, and also introduce the history of the banksia genus. The plant was named after Sir Joseph Banks, the first recorded scientific collector of the
Building Monash bridges

By JOSE GIBSON

A new book by Monash researchers documents the bridge-building legacy of the university's namesake, Sir John Monash.

Launched recently by Monash deputy vice-chancellor Professor Peter Davul, Monash Bridges is a typology study of reinforced concrete bridges that Sir John Monash either built or was involved with between 1897 and 1917.

The book is part of a larger Monash research project documenting the early work of the accomplished engineer, entrepreneur and military man.

Monash Bridges is the culmination of two years' research by historian and principal author Mr Lesley Allen, structural engineers Dr Alan Holgate (now retired) and Mr Geoff Taplin from Monash's Engineering faculty, with help from the Australian Heritage Commission.

"The 43 bridges in the book shed light on Monash as a businessman selling the technology to the engineering profession and to local communities of the day, and as an engineer finding economical design solutions," Mr Allen explained. "They also shed light on the lives of the ordinary people involved, the shire engineers and the workers. The bridges are built documents of how men worked at the time."

She said the book's other main focus was the engineering build - especially reinforced concrete construction - and that this area of research had gained ground in recent years.

With his then partner, J. T. Noble Anderson, and New South Wales firm Carter, Gummers and Company, Monash was instrumental in introducing the material into Victoria, having a solid legacy through structures such as bridges, water tanks and bridges.

"The first bridge is built in 1903. It is 100 years old. Monash and his colleagues had to work very hard to convince people about the technology at the time," Ms Allen said.

The project involved a great deal of historical detective work. The researchers' main sources were the University of Melbourne Archives, the Monash manuscript collection in the National Library in Canberra, the collection of architectural old newspapers, and local councils and government departments.

According to the authors, about half the bridges built by Monash are still standing today - of those, most are still in use, some are altered and some are under threat of demolition.

Copies of Monash Bridges are available from the Civil Engineering department on 9905 3842.

INPRINT

Days of Violence: The 1923 Police Strike in Melbourne by Ginnie Brown and Robert Holdaway (Hybrid - RRP $19.95)

Australia's first and only police strike in 1923 was short-circuited throughout the country. Published on the 75th anniversary of the strike, Days of Violence tells how a combination of available factors led to possibly the worst case of breakdown of law and order in Melbourne's history, when police were so provoked by an intransigent administration that they went on strike.

Phillip Law: The Antarctic Exploration Years 1954-66 by Kathleen Robertson (Australia - RRP $19.95)

Phillip Law's career in Antarctic exploration began in 1954, after he set up Australia's first Antarctic station, Mawson. Between 1954 and 1956, Law and members of the Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition returned to Antarctica each summer to explore and photograph more than 4000 nautical miles of its uncharted coast.

Based on the diaries of Law and other expeditioners, this finely bio- graphy provides a fascinating account of the daily operational activities of the expedition.

Ultimate adventure in a remote terrain, it is the story of Phillip Law's vision, his outstanding administrative abilities and the great achievements he attained for Australia in Antarctica.

Monash Bridges and former staff member Kathleen Robertson's previous book on Phillip Law, A Man for Antarctica, The Early Life of Phillip Law, covered the years between 1912 and 1934 and was based on his PhD thesis. Since meeting Law 10 years ago, her goal has been to complete the biographical work because it is, she says, "a story worth telling about a great Australian."

This latest work was published with assistance of the Royal Geographical Society of Australia and Monash University's Institute of Australian Studies and Monash Asia Institute. Speakers include Barbara Bollard.

Books are available from the bookstore at 1300 969 308 or online at monashbooks.com.au.

Art exhibitions

3-December '98

'Delicatessen' - 1998 Monash University Graphic Design Exhibition


3-December 1998

'Calligraphy and Beyond' - 1998 Monash University Asian Languages and Literature Department Exhibition

8-December '98

'Impoverished Riches' - 1998 Monash Asia Institute

15-December '98

'SBAC 1998' - 1998 Sumi-e Association of the Blue Mountains Exhibition

Monash University

4-23 January '99

Vocation care is available at Monash's Clayton campus for children aged 5 to 12 years old on weekdays. Facilities and activities include swimming, roller- skating, cooking, Olympic games, art and craft, pottery, science and much more! Cost: $5 per day (reduces for parents who qualify for Children's Assistance). Form an email for single days. Inquiries: Family Advisory Service, 9905 3516.
Blading caution urged

BY JOSIE GIBSON

Parents considering buying roller blades for their children this Christmas should be aware of the risks associated with this popular pastime.

According to a new report by the Monash University Accident Research Centre, the rapidly increasing popularity of in-line skating, as it is officially known, has been accompanied by an increase in injuries.

In-line skating provides fun, exercise and a means of transport for enthusiasts. Speed and inexperience, however, can prove a potentially dangerous mix.

The report, by researchers Dr Sharron Sherer and Ms Erin Cassell, is the latest in a series by MUARC looking at injury prevention in Australian sports.

The researchers reviewed formal research literature and also used informal sources such as discussions with in-line skating organisations to determine which injury prevention methods had proved effective and what are required further research.

They have recommended more research in particular into the role of arab garments, helmets, fall techniques and injury prevention education.

While in-line skating appeals to all ages, the researchers say most of the participants, and therefore most of those who sustain injuries, are aged between 10 and 14. "In-line skating injuries can be serious and disabling, with deaths having been reported both here and overseas," they caution.

In Australia, hospitalisation rates for in-line skating injuries are high compared with other sports. And Ms Sherer and Ms Cassell say that given the sport's rapidly growing popularity, injury prevention research should be a priority.

More than three-quarters of injuries result from falls, with the wrists usually sustaining the worst damage.

"Improvements in skate and wheel technology have resulted in a very fast skate which requires a certain amount of skill," the researchers say.

"Many novice skaters are overwhelmed by the speed of the in-line wheels and are unable to slow down or stop in time to avoid collisions and/or falling."

In-line skaters know how to find the lights... but it's the dark that often causes the damage.

The combination of an unruly base of support, a changing terrain - for example, an unexpected crack in the pavement - and poor protective equipment means the risk of injury is ever-present.

The rapidly increasing popularity of in-line skating has been accompanied by an increase in injuries.

According to the authors, even the most skilled skaters will fall at some stage, so the best protection against injury is full protective equipment such as helmets, knee pads and wrist guards.

But according to the results of their research, only a small proportion of in-line skaters wear full protective gear, and more research is needed to identify the barriers to implementing this safety measure. "Safety equipment needs to be presented as 'cool' so that children will wear it."

Parents buying skates as gifts should include protective gear and helmets as part of the present, they say.

As well, hire skating outlets, skate park operators and organisations of skating competitions should ensure all participants use full protective gear - and that they wear it properly, with helmets fastened at all times, for example.

The Monash team also recommends more emphasis on education and training for both experienced and novice skaters, and on enforcing a code of conduct towards pedestrians and on roads.

And they say local councils should work with local skaters' groups to develop effective skate management plans, including the provision of safe skating areas.

Copies of the report are available from MUARC on (03) 9905 4371.

Goalie in-line for glory

A Monash University staff member has been selected for the in-line hockey national squad for the world championships next year.

Adam Forrest, a research fellow in the Chemical Engineering department, played in the national championships in Perth earlier this year.

He was also recently selected as goal tender for the national squad to play in the Pan-Pacific championships early next year, and for the world championships in Switzerland in May.

In-line hockey is similar to ice hockey, with slightly different rules. Played on in-line skates on a roller-skating rink, it is ostensibly a non-contact sport.

The sticks and protective equipment are the same as those used in the fast and furious cousin, ice hockey.

Forrest also plays for the Monash Generals at club level and was a best goal scorer for the last two years at the interuniversity in-line hockey competition, which Monash won.

Indonesia's new drama: beyond the crisis

Continued from page 6 and individual artists in her research, which she presented in an international conference in Melbourne this month.

The conference, Democracy and Indonesia: The Crisis and Beyond, hosted by the Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, Monash Asia Institute and the University of Melbourne, with support from ABC's Radio Australia, is believed to be the first major collaborative initiative of its type.

It brought together established scholars, researchers and activists from Indonesia and Australia to examine the reasons for and likely outcomes of Indonesia's political and economic crisis.

According to Dr Bailey, the decline in the critical arts was largely due to Indonesia's political climate under Soeharto, and to the effects of commercialisation and globalisation of the mass media.

"Artists had to go through a lengthy process to obtain permission from the authorities to perform, and faced being barred for staging works that were politically critical," she said.

"Many artists were left wondering what to do. And given the political risks, the few who did remain in theatre had to be brave and were forced to disguise their social and political commentary in creative and humorous ways."

At the same time, Dr Bailey said, Indonesia's booming mass media created a cultural, intellectual and artistic drain on the local literary arts scene, as well as Indonesia's film industry.

"Actions were being suppressed and at the same time were being offered lucrative opportunities as performers and directors in fairly shallow or politically neutral television shows."

However, she said that since the economic crisis, the mass media had been forced to cut back significantly on their production and offered fewer temptations to performers. Previously dominant theatre groups had begun to reactivate.

"At this uncertain point in Indonesian history, the arts may well have a key role to play in maintaining social cohesion," Dr Bailey said.

"The current crisis has provided a context of restored and renewed importance. And the arts - particularly the performing arts - will hopefully assist Indonesians to reconnect and implement local forms of democracy."

...Danied by an increase in injuries.

According to the authors, even the most skilled skaters will fall at some stage, so protecting the body is important.

"In-line skating injuries can be serious and disabling, with deaths having been reported both here and overseas," they caution.

In Australia, hospitalisation rates for in-line skating injuries are high compared with other sports. And Ms Sherer and Ms Cassell say that given the sport's rapidly growing popularity, injury prevention research should be a priority.

More than three-quarters of injuries result from falls, with the wrists usually sustaining the worst damage.

"Improvements in skate and wheel technology have resulted in a very fast skate which requires a certain amount of skill," the researchers say.

"Many novice skaters are overwhelmed by the speed of the in-line wheels and are unable to slow down or stop in time to avoid collisions and/or falling."

In-line skaters know how to find the lights... but it's the dark that often causes the damage.

The combination of an unruly base of support, a changing terrain - for example, an unexpected crack in the pavement - and poor protective equipment means the risk of injury is ever-present.

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