Crazy ants threaten isle

BY DAVID BRUCE

The native wildlife of Christmas Island in the Indian Ocean, in part, the world-famous red land crab, is being threatened by a newcomer.

The exotic invasive ant, Anoplolepis gracilipes, or crazy ant, inadvertently introduced to the island by the Japanese, has decimated the millions of red crabs that live on the island. The crabs dominate the forest floor, occurring at extraordinary densities (one crab per square meter) and actively shaping and preserving the island ecosystem. In the past, the crabs have formed a formidable barrier to many would-be invaders that have disembarked from visiting ships. But now, too small to be eaten by the crabs, the crazy ant invades the forest floor. Dead and dying crabs litter the forest floor. In uninvaded sites, the familiar sounds of scuttling crabs have been replaced with the noise of carrion-feeding flies. We were saddened to see they had dead crabs in them," Professor Lake said. In 1997, Professor Lake was working on the island's southern shoreline, when he noticed some of the burrows were being attacked by the crazy ants. "We noticed that when we checked the crabs, the crazy ants came scrambling out instead. When we dug up some of these burrows, we were saddened to see they had dead crabs in them," Professor Lake said.

The impact of the crazy ant invasion goes beyond the red crabs. While the red crab has found an enemy in the crazy ant, the scale insects that feed on the tail rainforest trees have also found a friend. The ants and the scale insects have established a mutually beneficial association. The honeydew produced by the scale insects is eaten by the ants, which in turn protect the scale insects against natural predators such as wasps, spiders and parasites. Under the overall extent of the ant infestation is still unknown, but limited surveys by the research team estimate that up to 5 per cent of the island rainforest has been affected in about a dozen separate locations. They believe the ants have killed upwards of 2.5 million red crabs. And it seems the ant infestations are growing at a rapid rate and with no natural barriers to slow them. Exactly how they do this is unclear, although the scientists observed a slow death, from 24 to 36 hours, involving some sort of paralysis. Typically, Dr O'Dowd, said the ants invade crab burrows, kill the crabs and eat them. Adding insult to injury, the crazy ants then use the crab burrows as convenient nests.

Delegation makes US nuke visit

BY JOSIE GIBSON

A Monash-led delegation has visited Washington and New York as part of continuing talks on security and disarmament in the Asia-Pacific region. Last month's visit by 25 Asia-Pacific specialists was organized by Monash's National Centre for South Asian Studies (NC SAS) and the Monash Asia Institute. The three-day dialogue in Washington and the half-day seminar in New York were the second phase of a process initiated by Monash in August last year in the aftermath of nuclear tests by India and Pakistan. The nuclear tests had raised fears that the escalating tensions could lead to nuclear conflict.

Students pass on the safe-drinking message

Hear what I'm saying? Tanya Hanby and John Britton push the responsible drinking message in a special Student Theatre production during Monash Orientation 1999 at Clayton campus. For more on Orientation, turn to page 8. Photos by Rhonda Joyce.
Making multimedia easy

BY DEREK BROWN

Monash University academics have created a template that takes the mystery and hard work out of producing multimedia.

Dr Barry Richardson and Mr Andrew Brown from the Department of Psychology in Gippsland have produced the template to encourage academics to create their own multimedia presentations, such as CD-ROMs or websites.

According to Mr Brown, who is a multimedia officer in the department, it's simply a matter of academics filling in the blanks with the information they want. "It's very flexible, and is designed to be as easy to use as a word processor," he said.

The template prompts the designer to choose the number of sections for the presentation, label them and fill in the fields with text. Images can then be added by dragging them into the spaces provided.

A practical exercise, for example, a laboratory session examining a brain, can be filmed and loaded on to a CD-ROM or website along with additional information and graphics.

New group for global activities

The overall direction of Monash University's international activities will be coordinated by a new entity called Monash Global.

According to Monash vice-chancellor Professor David Robinson, Monash Global will ensure that the university's international strategy is fully integrated into overall Monash planning.

"The Monash Global initiative will make it clear that our international activities are an essential part of our core activities, and the global strategy will ensure that we support this work and seriously undertake to examine the best ways of doing it," Professor Robinson said.

Monash Global's activities will be managed by a board, with day-to-day activities being the responsibility of Monash deputy vice-chancellor Professor John Moloney and the university's executive director, International Affairs, Andrew McEwin.

Monash will continue to operate as a service organisation under Monash Global direction.

Delegation makes US nuke visit go-ahead

A delegation designed and synthesised by a Monash University team has been given the go-ahead for marketing to the general public.

The Australian Drug Evaluation Committee last month recommended that Releas be approved for marketing for the treatment of Parkinson's disease and multiple sclerosis.

Delegation members included Delegates from several Asian countries and the US, she said. "The dialogue in Melbourne last August had focused on the Australian and South Asian representatives."

In broadening the dialogue to include delegates from Russia, Korea, Japan, Singapore, and the US, Dr Vicziany said, a range of other regional questions could be addressed, such as the emerging role of China in Asia.

"The visit to this forum was enabling Monash as a credible player in the eyes of America, a source of experts with their fingers on the pulse of the region," Dr Vicziany said. "After all, the Asia-Pacific is our backyard."

Prescription forgery a bitter pill

A project studying the extent of prescription drug forgery in Victoria has been funded by a $10,000 grant from the Victorian Law Enforcement Drug Fraud Fund.

It involves researching data held by the Department of Human Services, Victoria Police, surveying doctors and pharmacists, and auditing prescriptions to identify forgeries.

Several types of people were involved in prescription forgery and drug abuse, Mr Scavone said, ranging from drug addicts and those trafficking in drugs or scripts to people who were medically dependent on drugs.

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BRIEFS

The Centre for the Analysis and Management of Biological Invasions has been established at Monash to help coordinate research into the ecological and economic impact of biological invasions and address policy issues on the movement of species around the globe.

"This is an era of global homogenisation," said Dr Dennis O' Dowd, the director of the centre. "Globalisation is usually viewed in the context of economics and information technology, but its biophysical implications are enormous and poorly explained. Biological invasions have become one of the major issues of humankind's global challenge."

"With the increasing flow of human commerce and trade, barriers to biological invasions have been increasingly broken down and the rate of introduction of alien species, both pests and accidental invaders, is increasing."

The creation of the centre, Dr O'Dowd said, will help bring an integrated approach to research and management of these invasions, incorporating ecological, economic and social perspectives.

"The invasion of Christmas Island by the crazy ant is a microcosm that vividly illustrates the impact and problems that invasive specie species cause around the globe," he said. "This is an ever-increasing problem and one of the major national and inter-national issues that must be tackled in the next century."
Corruption and crime threats for Taiwanese

By Jose Gibson

Organised crime and corruption — the 'black and gold' — are still the main internal threats facing Taiwan as it prepares to enter the new millennium, according to a Monash-based Taiwan specialist.

But according to Professor Bruce Jacobs, director of the Centre of East Asian Studies and its Taiwan Research Unit, while they had resulted in some 'spectacular' political murders, the two elements have not seriously threatened the island's democratic process.

"I think it's quite familiar in many developing democracies — will not be solved easily, but I believe the vast majority of Taiwan's citizens truly value their freedom and input into the political system," Professor Jacobs said.

"Taiwan faces the 21st century was the topic of a conference Professor Jacobs organised last month which brought together speakers from Taiwan and several Australian universities. Scholars and bureaucrats discussed topics ranging from relations with China to democrtisation and educational reform.

"The main issue facing Taiwan — relations across the Taiwan Strait — was unlikely to be resolved any time soon, Professor Jacobs predicted.

"The real issues are in China itself, between the hard-liners and moderates, he said, which "China is the clearest example of how the situation on Taiwan is effectively paralysed."

"Talks between Beijing and Taipei broke off in 1995 when Taiwan's President Lee Teng-hui made it clear that he would not allow Beijing to control Taiwan or endanger its democratisation, economic prosperity or social systems. Relations were "in a state of flux."

Despite the constant external threat from China, Taiwan has been able to maintain economic prosperity while building a vibrant democracy, a rarity in Asia. This underlying prosperity has enabled it to weather the worst effects of the Asian financial crisis.

Professor Jacobs said that while the story of Taiwan's 'economic miracle' was relatively well known, its transformation from an authoritarian state to a democracy was less understood and perhaps even more dramatic.

"Neither of these things happened overnight but rather they resulted from series of steps taken over many years," he said.

Many factors have contributed to Taiwan's success as an economy and as a democracy, he added. "There has generally been a clear national consensus about goals. And Taiwan has been blessed with a large number of very capable and public-spirited leaders in both government and opposition."

"The initial support from Monash has been crucial to the project," said Scott. "The researchers will use a combination of surveys and case studies to elicit information that can be compared with data from European, British and American markets. We hope the research findings can help inform policy and regulatory decisions in the UK."

"The aim of this type of research is to ultimately help to reduce costs to the industry and therefore to consumers," Mr Dapiran said.

Study to map car distribution

By JOSIE GIBSON

Marketing experts from Monash University are involved in the first stage of an Australia-wide research program to map motor vehicle distribution.

The first phase of the project has attracted $100,000 in funding from industry, with the amount set to double in 2000.

The research is being carried out under the auspices of the International Car Distribution Programme Australia (ICDPA), which was set up last year to conduct research in the local market.

The distribution system — supplying cars to dealers, selling, servicing and remarketing them — is vital to the car industry, yet research until recently has focused more on the stages from design through to manufacture.

"Australians bought cars in record numbers in 1999, and news of mergers and takeovers and industry cooperation continues to make headlines," according to Mr Peter Dapiran, coordinator of graduate logistics programs in the Marketing department at Caulfield campus.

"Our research program will fill a major gap in business research."

Mr Dapiran and his team are working with two Australian and one British researcher, Ms Susan Freeman and Ms Linda Brennan, will each work on different aspects of the project.

Mr Dapiran will carry out a study of new vehicle dealer best practice, aimed at comparing the operations and performances of Australian new vehicle dealers with those in other countries. Ms Brennan will oversee research into the used vehicle market, while Ms Freeman will be responsible for the new vehicle supply and stocking segment.

"The reasons for starting ICDP in Australia was that vehicle distribution did not have the same basis of authoritative, internationally comparable data as manufacturing and we need to determine what are best practices," Mr Dapiran said.

US official to be keynote guest at Gippsland forum

The American Under-secretary for Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr Bill Long Thompson, will be the keynote speaker at a technology conference in Gippsland this month.

"Uniting our Rural Communities — Networking the Nation," will be held at the university's Gippsland campus on 30 March.

Mr Long Thompson has been a lifelong advocate of the development and advancement of rural America and of the welfare of rural families, with broad experience in Congress. Outside politics, she has been a college business professor and co-manager of her family's farm.

Topics at the Gippsland conference will include the social and economic aspects of the technology age, women's role in rural development and the potential of the rise of small cooperatives.

"We were acutely aware of the lack of an all-embracing resource," he explained. "Student noticeboards within institutions are limited in their scope and disorganised in their content."

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"The aim of this type of research is to ultimately help to reduce costs to the industry and therefore to consumers," Mr Dapiran said.

Website fills info void for students

By ADAM MILLER

Three Melbourne students have pooled their resources and entrepreneurial skills to develop a new website aimed at secondary and tertiary students.

Launched this month, Uniworx is the brainchild of Daniel Reich and Ken Gough, marketing graduates from Swinburne University, and Scott Julian, an information technology specialist who studies at Monash University.

Monash is the principal sponsor of Uniworx, which has been developed as a one-stop shop for tertiary and VCE students.

"The initial support from Monash really helped to get Uniworx off the ground and attract further support from the education and business sectors," Daniel said.

"The three say the concept emerged from conversations among friends lamenting the lack of a single source of relevant and easily accessible information for students.

"We were acutely aware of the lack of an all-embracing resource," he explained. "Student noticeboards in close vicinity to students, but rather alongside, working with those in the industry and therefore to best practices," Mr Dapiran said.

"The researchers will use a combination of surveys and case studies to elicit information that can be compared with data from European, British and American markets. ICDP research in the UK has reportedly led to major changes in the way cars are produced and sold there.

"The aim of this type of research is to ultimately help to reduce costs to the industry and therefore to consumers," Mr Dapiran said.

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Welcome to our first Schools column, a round-up of news and information about Monash University especially for staff and senior students at Victorian secondary schools. Our aim is to keep you up to date with events, seminars and sessions of interest to both teachers and students.

The University's extensive schools liaison program offers a variety of activities and services, ranging from complex transition research and teachers' seminars and events to course information sessions for prospective students and program material at easing the transition to university.

We hope to keep you informed about many of these activities throughout 1999.

Brochures out

A brochure outlining services available for secondary schools has been sent to principals, careers coordinators and VCAs coordinators at all Victorian schools. The brochure also includes details and dates of major events for 1999.

‘Explorers’ wanted

'Explore Monash' sessions are being conducted during the school holidays to introduce to primary and intermediate students and their families the opportunity to speak to staff from a variety of disciplines about their options at Monash.

The sessions, which include excursions to locations such as student residences and facilities, will be held at the Gippsland campus on 8 April and the Clayton campus (with an optional visit to another campus) on 9 April. Both programs commence at 10.30 am.

Seminars planned

The 'At Monash' seminar series consists of five courses and career sessions for Year 11 and 12 students. The sessions provide information based on broad discipline areas.

Science, Pharmacy and Medicine seminars will be held on 26 April and Business and Economics, Information Technology and Engineering will be held on 28 April. All seminars run from 1 pm to 3 pm.

1999 successes

About 6700 offers for Monash University undergraduate courses have been made to students during the first round of VTAC offers. Science, Education, Engineering and Information Technology courses have all experienced an increase in demand, with other disciplines relatively stable.

So far, scholarships valued at up to $10,000 a year have been offered to 250 commencing students. These include six Awards for Excellence, 70 Denis Scholarships, and 30 Merit and Equity scholarships.

More than 600 senior secondary students have been accepted into the Enhancement Studies program and have been issued letters.

For more information, contact the Prospective Students Office on (03) 9905 1664.

Finding a point in (Dream) time

By Peter Goldie

Deep in the mists of time, a spirit world struggle between good and evil forced an Aboriginal tribe called the Djungan to cease camping on the vast table-top mountain of their ancestors.

Ngarrabulgan, about 100 kilometres north-west of Cairns, is at the heart of the Djungan’s Dreaming. The mesa – 18 kilometres long by six wide, with 200 to 400 metre high cliffs – is owned by the Djungan, but they will not forego there or stay on the mountain overnight. They are even worse to travelling through the area.

The Djungan have lived continuously in the area for 35,000 years, but today avoid the largest natural geological feature in their area because they believe it to be the home of Eecko, a dangerous evil spirit.

It is unlikely an exact reason why the Djungan stopped camping on Ngarrabulgan will ever be known.

But Monash academic Dr Bruno David, who is a Logan Research Fellow in the Department of Geography and Environmental Science, believes that with detailed research of the archaeological sites, he can pinpoint the time camping ceased to take place on the mountain, and in doing so reveal something more.

“The implication is that this may be the onset of the Djungan belief in Eecko,” said Dr David, who has excavated 16 caves and other sites on the mountain and a further eight in the surrounding region.

“The cessation of camp use on the mountain-top was systematic. We have no idea why this suddenly happened — it did not occur in individual, isolated events. We also know is that about 650 years ago there was a change in the way people associated with the mountain.”

“The dating of this event, taken with the Dreamtime stories of the Djungan elders, leads me to ask whether the Dreamtime histories we hear about may be more dynamic than usually assumed.”

According to Dr David, the research not only illuminates a watershed in the Djungan’s cultural history and its relationship with the natural environment, but also demystifies some aspects of the Dreamtime which have taken hold in popular perceptions.

He believes the work challenges the perceived timelessness of Dreaming, an aspect of Aboriginal culture that has flavoured white impressions of Aboriginal history.

There is the impression that, while Dreamtime stories, Aboriginal societies have been timeless, static and unchanging,” he told Monash News, “but like all peoples all over the world, Aboriginal society has always been changing.”

New chancellor takes up position at Monash

Nine new faces from a broad cross section of the community have joined Monash’s peak decision-making body to help guide the university into the new millennium.

The first meeting for 1999 of the University Council recently welcomed the new chancellor and eight new Council members.

The chairmen of BHP, Mr Jerry Ellis, provided over his first official function as chancellor following the retirement of Mr Bill Rogers.

After formally introducing the new members, Mr Ellis noted that Monash had grown and improved under the leadership of Mr Rogers. He said he was proud to be chancellor of a university with such a diverse and respected profile and he urged the new Council members to focus on the key issues facing the university.

The new Council members are:

• Mr Max Sperling — head, Group Human Resources Wespac. He is a leading figure in human resources and industrial relations and was first assistant secretary in the Office of the Premier in 1979.

• Ms Wendy Peter — partner in Arthur Robinson & Hedderwicks where she practises in competition and commercial law. She is a graduate of Monash and Cambridge.

• Dr Mark Schapper — currently runs his own mining consultancy after many years in the management of CRA. He is also chairman of Monotech.

• Dr Paul Rodan — has been registrar in Monash’s Science faculty since 1991. He has previously served on the councils of both Chisholm Institute and Monash University and is a graduate of Monash.

• Associate Professor Andrew Markus — a long-time member and former head of the History department at Monash, he has teaching and research expertise in Australian Aboriginal history and immigration issues.

• Mr Darriel Jeffree — a former director of PowerNet Victoria and Monash University and is a graduate of Monash.

• Ms Helen Andrew — a former director of the Centre for Drama and Theatre at Monash and is a graduate of the University of Melbourne.

• Dr Peter O’Young — a former director of PowerNet Victoria and the Australian Road Research Board. He has been involved in many large construction projects over the past 40 years.

“Most of the people on the new Council bring something entirely new to the Board,” said Dr Ellis.

In step: Monash University’s new chancellor, Mr Jerry Ellis, left, with vice-chancellor Professor David Robinson. Photo by Rhonda Joyce.
Funding hospital services – back to basics

The funding of hospital services is a perennial topic of public debate, and one of the most politically charged. Stuart Peacock, from Monash University's Health Economics Unit, argues that it's time for policymakers to get back to basics.

 Hospitals represent the symbolic façade of health services to many people, and account for a significant proportion of total health service spending. It is not surprising, then, that hospital funding policy has become a politically charged issue in many countries.

However, while the public and political debates continue, it is important to return to some basic principles of public sector health service funding which apply in many countries:

- Health service funding mechanisms should reflect the objectives of the health system, which should in turn reflect society's objectives;
- Efficiency and equity should be central considerations, with a strong emphasis on population health and health outcomes;
- Incentives arising from funding mechanisms should promote the achievement of the objectives of the health system;
- Mechanisms should be based on scientific evidence, and the role of judgement should be explicit.

The first of these principles is one which few countries have begun to address in a systematic manner. The idea is that society pays for public health services through taxation, and health services are provided to best meet society's health care needs.

To do this we must first examine society's values and objectives to determine what 'best' means to different people. To many, the aims of the health system may seem obvious: to maximise health and cure illness. But research indicates that there are a range of possible objectives relating to health, economics and social justice.

The lack of understanding about society's values and objectives has led to the de facto development of objectives by health system bureaucrats and service providers which are believed to be related to societal goals. To what extent to which bureaucratic and politically determined goals are relevant to society is open to debate.

The two prime considerations of most health systems are efficiency and equity. Efficiency does not, as many perceive it, mean cost cutting. Instead, health systems generally seek to address operational and allocative efficiency. Operational efficiency refers to producing a given range of health services with the least resources possible. Allocative efficiency relates to maximising the wellbeing of the population from those health services.

Efficiency is based in the notion that resources are allocated so that the health of the population is maximised given the resources available.

Equity is more difficult to define, but most countries have adopted a goal of equal access for equal need. In other words, individuals or populations with similar health care needs should have the same opportunity to use health services.

The funding system for hospital services in Australia is complex and loosely organised. This is highlighted by the mixed response at federal and state levels in the design of funding systems based on the pursuit of efficiency and equity goals.

At the federal level, the health care agreements between federal and state/territory governments have paid only limited attention to these objectives. Debate has instead tended to focus on the size of the relative contribution of the different levels of government to the hospital sector.

Estimates of future funding in the agreements are based on a combination of past levels of use, the population and its age and gender composition, and political negotiation. Funding health services on the basis of past use has long been recognised as a source of significant inequalities and inefficiencies. Areas with historically high levels of use are rewarded with increased levels of funding, often without proper scrutiny.

The interrelationship between health service use, needs and availability is highly complex, but sound methods to untangle the relationships have largely been overlooked in the new agreements.

One response to criticism has been the equalisation process whereby states and territories can negotiate for additional funds through the Commonwealth Grants Commission. However, while this may result in funding more closely related to need, the process and choice of indicators of need is potentially ad hoc and arbitrary. And there is no guarantee that these extra funds will end up in the health service budget.

At the state level, the goals of efficiency and equity have been more explicitly addressed. The development of new funding systems in Victoria, and its adoption by elsewhere, signalled a commitment to efficiency and equity. The New South Wales approach is, by contrast, based explicitly on equity considerations. It uses weighted capitation funding, where funds are distributed on the basis of population adjusted for indicators of health service needs.

Many issues have arisen from this parting of ways in funding approaches. First, the autonomy of health departments in developing their approach is an opportunity for innovation, but may also result in a duplication of effort. The design of funding mechanisms raises a wide range of technical, bureaucratic and political issues that may be better dealt with cooperatively, rather than by different groups in relative isolation.

This has led to some evidence of national initiatives in the development of casemix funding.

More importantly, the divergence in approaches raises questions about the relevance of the approaches across the Australian population as a whole. With casemix funding justified largely by efficiency goals, and weighted capitation justified largely by equity considerations, what are the values and objectives of the populations of different states and territories? It seems rather extreme to suggest that the people of Albury and Wodonga have such different standpoints on health services that they would support the different approaches taken by their relevant health departments.

It appears likely that Australians generally would support a mix of efficiency and equity considerations. This implies that health departments should be drawing on others' experiences with casemix and capitation to learn more of the useful aspects of the two approaches. This reconciliation should be fundamental to the development of health service funding in future years for two reasons.

First, while state and territory health departments are in the best position to determine the health needs of their populations, the funding of health services should reflect the values of the whole Australian population, which pays for them.

Second, neither casemix nor weighted capitation represents the final word in achieving efficiency and equity goals. A combination of these approaches is probably the most powerful than either on isolation.

Dr Stuart Peacock is a senior lecturer at the Centre for Health Program Evaluation at Monash University.
Drama treats ahead in '99

A visit by a respected Indonesian theatre group, an Asian orchestra tour and some of the activities on the Monash University performing arts calendar in 1999.

The executive director of the Office of Performing and Visual Arts, Mr Stephen Dee, said the new program underline Monash’s continuing commitment to the arts and the artistic community.

"Monash is establishing a program of arts projects which focus on two key areas: enhancing the Monash student experience and providing targeted support for arts education, training and research," Mr Dee said.

The program kicked off this month with two productions by the Centre for Drama and Theatre Studies, Jacques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris, and Tryptykh, three short plays written and produced by Monash students and graduates.

The successful free lunchtime Concert Series has been expanded this year, with up to 10 productions at each of Monash’s six Victorian campuses. The concerts, open to the public, feature a wide range of international and local artists.

Later this month we see a visit by the respected Gandaki theatre group, which managed to promote its message of social and political debate in Indonesia despite the restrictions of the Soeharto era.

Also this month, the Melbourne Symphony returns to the Robert Blackwood Hall for a new concert series. And evening concerts at Clayton have been expanded, featuring Monash musical ensembles with repertoire ranging from chamber music to symphonies and jazz.

Mr Dee said a key long-term goal was to develop Monash as a centre for Asian performance development, with a program of concerts and festivals of South Asian music and dance.

In July, the New Monash Orchestra, comprising mostly students, will embark on a tour of Vietnam and Malaysia, with the Victorian Orchestra providing support.

And in mid-1999, in conjunction with the Victorian College of the Arts, Monash will host an international theatre workshop festival featuring up to 10 of the world’s best teachers and practitioners. The festival, which will be conducted at the VCA, will comprise a series of workshops for professional theatre practitioners from around the country.

"The festival will allow Australians to work and study with leaders in the field," Mr Dee said. "They will be able to get the benefit of these experts’ wisdom without leaving the country."

Tryptykh with Tryptych

What do fairies, goldfish and a woman named Esther have in common?

The answer is a program entitled Tryptych, featuring three innovative and original short plays by Monash University students and graduates, to be performed during March in the Drama Theatre of the Performing Arts Complex at Monash’s Clayton campus.

Tryptykh, deliberately misspelt, to reflect the inherent mystery and intrigue of the piece, is a program of not-to-be-missed original theatre. Although dissimilar in content, each play, and the works. All three plays are first productions, directed by their authors. Each also includes an original music score, "an essential theatrical element designed to enhance the performance," says Betty Hanmer, co-writer of "Searching for Esther", "I can’t imagine the plays without it."

In the first play, 'Off With the Fairies’, writer and director Rebecca Smith promises a light-hearted but interesting revivification of childhood. This tale of six Australian Bush fairies, who communicate through song, movement and gibberish, hints at more serious environmental issues. Multi-talented Smith also composed the accompanying original music for didgeridoo, orienta, and drums.

Alan and Bella, a couple who may or may not have a goldfish, are central characters of 'The Goldfish is Dead', written and directed by Darrell Jeffere. This play is a clever, insightful and visually stunning exploration of communication – the way we talk to each other. Jeffere’s play is designed to make us wonder if the spoken word is actually a barrier to human relations.

The final play, 'Searching for Esther’, written by close friends Marcia Fisker and Betty Hanmer and directed by Hanmer, focuses on three generations of women, with the Biblical story of Esther as a backdrop. The piece examines the difficulties between generations, the interwoven nature of their conflicts, and their friendship becomes strained when it provokes questions of identity and creates conflicts for Hafsaah’s adolescent daughter, Madi.

To highlight the originality of the plays, a program of original music, led and performed by Monash students, will take place in the courtyard outside the Drama Theatre following both Saturday evening performances.

Described by Betty Hanmer as ‘chaotic theatre’, these three short works, with their diverse themes, promise an intimate and satisfying theatrical experience. Hopefully, they will also alert us to future productions from these talented and enthusiastic playwrights.

What: Tryptych
Where: Drama Theatre, Performing Arts Centre, Clayton campus
When: 9 April 20 and 25-27 March
Who: Centre for Drama and Theatre Studies
To book, telephone (03) 9905 0087 or (03) 9905 1111.

From cheese-making to play-making

"Sometimes a major traumatic event can turn your life around."

These are Darrell Jeffere’s words, and for him the event that changed his life was the breakup of his marriage. It was also the catalyst for his play, 'The Goldfish is Dead', which evolved steadily over the subsequent seven years.

"The divorce made me reconsider my life," says Jeffere. ‘I quit my research job in the cheese-making industry and moved from Mt Gambier to Adelaide, where I enrolled at Flinders University and majored in drama and American studies. I also studied philosophy for three years."

Jeffere’s life is full. In addition to writing and directing his own play, he writes poetry, in president of the Monash Postgraduate Association, has just been elected to the Monash University Council, and is completing his PhD in drama, focusing on the work of Antonin Artaud. "This French writer’s philosophy made me see that my own play had a certain validity," he says.

'The Goldfish is Dead' is Jeffere’s first play, but he hopes not his last. I have visions of becoming a full-time playwright, and perhaps even directing other plays. I would very much like to direct Chekov’s Uncle Vanya one day."

"Fill", by Gippsland photographer Sue Purdy. The 1999 work is part of an exhibition of photographs, Love Letters, by the artist on show at the Helen Gory Gallery in Prahran until 3 April. A Photographic technique pioneered by artist Man Ray in the 1920s, photograms are created by placing objects on photographic paper and exposing for shadows.

"Tryptykh", by Gippsland photographer Sue Purdy. The 1999 work is part of an exhibition of photographs, Love Letters, by the artist on show at the Helen Gory Gallery in Prahran until 3 April. A Photographic technique pioneered by artist Man Ray in the 1920s, photograms are created by placing objects on photographic paper and exposing for shadows.
American post-war consumer culture garbage bags by Gary Wilson quickly became synonymous with Maria Kozic, a floral arrangement of POP's legacy is surprising, living on in the airbrushed houses of Howard Management, dominant for the next century. As media accounts, cartoons, maps, photographs, film, memoirs and campaign maps, Foster shows how the basis of public management is undergoing radical change. Fighting Fictions challenges the idea that war fictions, histories and memoirs are effectively written before the facts of public management. Professor Owen Hughes, deputy head of Monash's Department of Management, provides an overview of theories and principles that form the basis of public management into the 21st century. Fighting Fictions: War, Narrative and National Identity by Kevin Foster. Pluto Press (RRP $31.50)

The theatrical piece was devised quite humorous in parts. "The production is aimed at welcoming our new students with the theme of a millennium dance party. "The production is aimed at welcoming our new students with the theme of a millennium dance party. The theatrical piece was devised with a focus on the Falklands War, the author also uses examples of propaganda. Professor Owen Hughes, deputy head of Monash's Department of Management, provides an overview of theories and principles that form the basis of public management into the 21st century. Fighting Fictions: War, Narrative and National Identity by Kevin Foster. Pluto Press (RRP $31.50)

Using a variety of sources such as media accounts, cartoons, photographs, film, memoirs and campaign maps, Foster shows how society's myths about war precede and actually shape the way we represent and record conflict. With a focus on the Falklands War, the author also uses examples from the first and second World Wars, the Spanish Civil War and the Gulf War. Dr Kevin Foster is a lecturer in the English department at Monash University.
Orientation a success

By ADAM MULLER

From abseiling and accounting to mentoring and mechanical engineering, the full Monash University experience was on display recently during Orientation 1999.

For the thousands of students new to Monash, Orientation provided a rare glimpse of what's ahead - inside the classroom as well as outside.

Monash Orientation director Associate Professor Ian Ward said the annual event went off like clockwork.

"One of our primary goals during Orientation is to get new students involved, whether it be in academic activities, sporting clubs or social events," Dr Ward said.

"The turnouts to the opening ceremonies at the various campuses - particularly at Caulfield, which was outstanding - show that the model we have developed is very successful."

Dr Ward said Orientation was the one time in the university calendar when students had the opportunity to see and sample nearly every aspect of university life.

"They can ask questions, explore and generally enjoy themselves," he said. "Research continues to support the idea of a link between a smooth transition to university life and academic and social success."

Activities at Orientation 1999 ranged from the educational to the exotic, with fire-eaters and knife-jugglers at Caulfield, boating forays for Parkville students, trampolining and tango at Clayton and much more.

Many students used the opportunity to sign up for tutorials and to get to know the lecturers, tutors and classmates who will play a major role in their lives in the coming year.

The first Orientation sessions specifically for parents and partners were successfully staged at Clayton and Peninsula campuses, attracting scores of adults interested in learning how to help new students manage the move from secondary school.

Monash will hold a special Orientation Summit on 16 April for academics and other staff to review Monash's existing program of activities and plan for Orientation 2000.

Fun while the sun shines: Views of Orientation 1999, above and left, by photographers Elizabeth Dias, Andrew Bareham and lastword.