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

Professor Thea Brown, of Monash, 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 we expect them to solve the problems themselves was not possible. The court had to be proactive 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.

Back to uni for Russian dinosaurs

Looking through the jaws of a prehistoric era, Ms Liddy Kool, manager of Monash University's Palaeontology Laboratory, gets close to a 7-metre long Tyrannosaurus, just one of the exhibits on show at the Centre of the Great Russian Dinosaurs exhibition presented by the Monash Science Centre at Deakin University's Burwood campus. Open Sundays 11 am - 1 pm until November. For more information, call the Monash Science Centre on (03) 9400 1370. Photo by Greg Ford.
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 Ms Max Morgan-Jones, 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 at 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 Tidball, Ms Rosalie Trioli, Ms Anita Forrest and Ms Judith D’Alaisio, 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 Tidball, 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 to 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 Tidball 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.

Monash Diploma of Education students Barbara Murphy (left) and Vanessa Callery demonstrate an airrespirator 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 'Time Zone' - exploring the properties of solid, liquid and gas, and beat hot air balloons, find off rockets, conducted experiments on body clocks and discussed the properties of liquid nitrogen.

BRIEFS

Politics lecturers head to Princeton

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

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

Dr Roger Speigel 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 host a major industry economics conference in Melbourne next month.

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

The event will bring together experts 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.

Prominent speakers include Professor John Parish 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.business.monash.edu.au/Depts/Eco/

Support group formed for Cambodians

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

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 to Cambodia. For more information, contact Ms翀Orin Chong on (03) 9503 8240 or email the15@monash.edu.au.

New hospital planned for Berwick

A new community hospital in to be built sent to Monash University’s Berwick campus.

The 106-bed Berwick Community Hospital, due to open 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 New, 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.

Hospitals miss drug reactions

Continued from page 1

"It's found, in my references, probably more than 40 or 50 studies for adults, but for pediatrics 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 of care in 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 medications to health insurers.

"We're getting the costs for each case from the hospital, and we are also looking at the cost of caring for parents 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 3.5 million people and provides most of the city's water supply, and in the outer east it supports an agricultural industry worth more than $30 million annually.

In metropolitan Melbourne, the Yarra is important both as a local feature and as a recreational and tourism activity. Yet very little is known about how it makes this lowland river tick.

Dr Breen says that there have been no major problems with the Yarra, increasing development in the downstream areas is not seen as likely to ensure a secure future for the river.

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

"Land use has changed dramatically. About 15 per cent of the catchment is now urban, while 70 per cent is farmland and 20 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 its carbon, or 'fodder,' supplies.

This study will focus on three of the Yarra's five distinct sections: road tamed from Wolli to the upper end of Warrawandy Gorge, gorge (Warrawandy Gorge to Flemington Lane), and urban lowlands from Flemington Lane to Digital Falls.

It will examine the impact of urbanisation on each of these 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 measured 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 smaller tributary streams and main stem of the Yarra.

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

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 apparent booms 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 objectives.

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 a report a report for the Chartered Accountants in Australia looking at the uptake of IT among their members.

After responses from nearly 250 firms, the inquiry found that accounting companies were also encouraged by their conventional IT use, despite being confronted with issues such as obsolescence and Y2K. Much investment will still be undertaken in a fashion matched by internal conviction over the implementation and potential applications of new IT.

"Although most businesses had achieved operational benefits from their IT investments, very few have translated these into strategic business benefits," he said.

Professor Amrik Sohal. Photo by Andrew Hardman.

"This is shown by the relatively little positive outcome that was evidenced in areas that 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 goals with technical capability 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 in step with technological advances results in a gap between generation and implementation, a gap which can mean the project will fail or be delayed.

The report shows that while top management gave itself credit for generating nearly half of all the most successful IT project ideas (40 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 can only be dispensed by experts in the outside organisations in performing less well than their own.

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

Regardless of impediments and questionable results, businesses continue to invest in new IT, in many cases using the approaching Y2K scare to creep 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 Australian Accountants in Australia looking at recent developments, and addressed on 14 May at Monash's Peninsular campus as part of the Monash/Finance Business Association Program.

Conclusively, it was the day Senator Brian Harradine rocked Canberra by coming out against 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 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 was trading off present consumption for future consumption.

But if he allowed himself a value judgment, Professor Dixon would prefer to see the money spent now on improving the community's quality of life and reducing poverty, because 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 intergenerational 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 imperial, indescriminate 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-represented Monash Model, Professor Dixon showed 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...
Grads need oral skills: study

By JOSE 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 Genda Crosby, 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," they said.

Ms Crosby 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 presentation and oral examination presentation," Ms Crosby and Dr Ward said.

"Some departments do not 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 recommended 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 discussions and learn to defend their views, in both group and individual situations.

"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 Clare Murray-White's sculpture, 'Lars Compitalis', translates roughly to 'the cars of the crosswalks and the city'. Photo by The Visual Researcher.

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 Clare 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 in 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 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 'silves', 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 for which it will be accessible to the community.

"Lars Compitalis' translates roughly to 'the cars of the crosswalks 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 archeologists. "The whole experience has had a remarkable impact on me," she said.

Other institutions

Other academic institutions, however, are 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 internet. And prospective students will be able to come into the library, browse the VTAC Guide online, and lodge their VTAC applications."

--- Julia Pace

Peninsula library opened

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

The $8.8 million purpose-built facility was designed by award-winning architects Williams and has to meet the expectations of 21st-century learning requirements.

The final result is a facility that combines traditional learning methods 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 internet. And prospective students will be able to come into the library, browse the VTAC Guide online, and lodge their VTAC applications."

Schools

Enforcement studies

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

The Enforcement Studies Program offers high-achieving secondary school 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 for 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.

In April 1990 I was asked by蘸he Australian Cabinet. The then Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, to meet Bill Gates, who was here too. So was the Industry Minister, John Button. The Treasurer, Paul Keating, wasn't interested. Michael Duffy, Communications Minister, wasn't there. 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, wasn't there.

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.

More than one million Australians are owners of the Internet. Our daily life is dominated by media. These indicators ought to make us a very well-informed, confident, secure 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 cultural under­ standing.


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 new common distinction between 'information rich' and 'information poor' was passing. Slump, WtMe!, Power, was 0V88.

From about 1978 I argued the need for a national information policy to establish a framework for future information usage 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 arranged to meet the Minister of 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, wasn't there.

Things have changed. In March 1996, 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 page of the Daily Telegraph, which the then government had purchased. The newspaper is currently being distributed to all Australians.

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 démonstration 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: Growing 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 signalled. 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 funds.

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 1996, at last, there is an uneasy feeling in both major parties that we have lost opportunities to face up to policy issues 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-value.

The reality is not like that at all. Surveys in Canada and Australia indicate a prevailing pessimism among 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 unemployed. 'Free' time then becomes oppressive and has to be 'filled' (or denaturalised). 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 workplace 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 impart an actual value to their own time use. Typically, time-use value is conferred by the employer, usually an employer. If an employee 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 call tolerance, did have the effect of filtering out prejudice from mainstream media, other than some talk-back radio outlets. Now prejudice, in industrialised and digital well — and the Internet plays a part.

Cesare Pavese quoted Izael Rosso referred to "a bonus of transcendence", the decline of an over-heroic belief system which makes sense of the contemporary world. This contributes to the rise of cults committed to a spiritual or apocalyptic view, with cult members seeing themselves as vic­ tims, leading to an absolute commit­ ment to a cause or ideology, including — all too often — the use of killing and terror as ideological tools.

The political process must be revivified. This won't just depend on par­ lament, political parties and voting. It will require a balancing process with counterbalancing forces and more creative involvement by intermediate bodies, for example, business groups and trade unions, churches, environmentalism, a fearless judiciary, universities and other research com­ munities, stronger and more diverse media.

Reviewing politics will involve encouraging knowledge, curiosity, understanding, scepticism and transparency. It will also require a revolution in education to redefine: 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.fcl.monash.edu.au/barryjones/ BarryJones.html.
In support of artistic rights

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 Smithsonian.

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 won a three-year presidency 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 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 artists to be reproduced without artists’ permission, or their image destroyed or manipulated for commercial gain.

And unlike writers, few artists receive royalty fees when their work is re-used 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.”

Exhibition provides taste of aero-zone

The idea of mobile, one of the works in Natural Disasters/Disasters Unnatural, an exhibition of work from the 1960s 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 1 July. For details, call (03) 9905 4217. Photo courtesy of the artist.
Studies, has controversial Australian party in 1939.

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 Australian leaders. In his work, A Furious Hunger, Grant said:

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By Derek Brown

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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 GILSON

Pick a sporting fixture around Monash University and one figure is sure to appear 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 well-versed sports buff – former player DRL games for the Christian Brothers College Old Boys, runner, coach, president and administrator ("Carn the Aubus").

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. He aims 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 soccer team to enable them to cross the Tasman and compete 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.

Chasing Majorca gold

BY COREY NASSAU

If self-made Monash resident and Australian luger fame" Christopher Easby can hold his unquestionable health and fitness together, he might just make it in along to see some of the top-class sporting action on offer at this year's World University Games.

More than 2000 university students from 130 countries will converge on the island of Palma de Majorca in Spain in July to compete for gold across 13 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 Rocha, 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, 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 simply 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 Rocha, a deferred business and economics student, swimming

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 recent' swimmers.

"I'm in a squad with Alex Pope, Michael Klin, 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) 9065 6100.

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 6pm in the Shell Theatrette, level 2, 1 Spring Street, Melbourne. To reserve a seat, contact Ms Jackie Taylor by 15 June on (03) 9065 8757, fax (03) 9903 8153 or email Jackie.Taylor@anu.monash.edu.au

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