DNA used in battle to save the wombat

Monash to lead biotech centre of excellence

A $43.5 million Centre for Stem Cells and Tissue Repair at Monash University will rapidly advance the research and development of both adult and embryonic stem cells for the treatment of a range of diseases and conditions.

The facility, to be based at the Science Technology Research and Innovation Precinct (STRIP) on the Clayton campus, will be funded by the federal government, with an additional $10 million provided by the state government. The new centre will include research partners from several leading Australian universities, research organisations and biotechnology companies.

In making the announcement in Parliament House last month, Prime Minister John Howard said this field of research had the potential to find new treatments for diabetes, vascular, bone and nerve damage, kidney disease and diseases of the blood and the skin.

He said Australia needed to establish centres of excellence in research to be competitive on a world basis. "Under Professor Alan Trounson's leadership, the Centre for Stem Cells and Tissue Repair will provide the vehicle for Australia to compete in the rapidly growing area of tissue regeneration and cell therapies," Mr Howard said.

Vice-chancellor of Monash University Professor David Robinson said Australian researchers would remain at the forefront of developments in stem cell technology. "The federal government's commitment to establishing this biotechnology centre of excellence will position Australia as a regional and world centre for innovation in biotechnology," Professor Robinson said.

The new centre will bring together research groups across the fields of biomedicine, biotechnology, IVF technology, genomics, bioinformatics and nanotechnology. It will be housed in the STRIP, currently under construction, close to the site of the proposed Australian Synchrotron at Monash.

Monash's key partners are the University of Adelaide, the Victor Chang Cardiovascular Research Institute, the Peter MacCallum Cancer Institute, the universities of New South Wales, Queensland and Melbourne, the Australian National University, Swinburne University of Technology, the Australian Genome Research Facility and the commercial operations of ES Cell International and BresaGen limited.

Education programs at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels will be offered through the centre, along with a community education program to inform schools and the general public about issues in biotechnology.

The Monash Institute of Reproduction and Development will be a leading player in the development, together with many other research groups across the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences.

"Using innovative techniques, Ms Walker is attempting to answer long-standing questions about the biology of the wombat, a difficult task due to its size and nocturnal, trappy, nature. Ms Walker's use of a simple yet effective method of gathering samples for DNA testing, which does not require trapping or taking blood samples of the endangered northern hairy-nosed wombat, through what researchers say is the result of European settlement, agriculture and vermin such as the rabbit."

Out in the field - Ms Faith Walker with one of the many wombats that have made their way past her sticky-tape. Photo S. Grover/Wombat Rise Sanctuary

WILDLIFE RESEARCH

A project by a Monash University researcher to determine the impact of loss of habitat on wombats is yielding information that could prove vital in the quest to save the endangered northern hairy-nosed wombat.

Funded by an RSPCA Alan White Scholarship, the National Geographic Society, Australian Geographic Society and Mark Mitchell Fund, the project aims to determine how habitat fragmentation affects the social and genetic structure of the southern hairy-nosed wombat. By examining the southern hairy-nosed wombat's response to habitat fragmentation, Ms Faith Walker, a PhD student in the School of Biological Sciences, is hoping to better understand the effect of long-term isolation on the social organisation of the northern hairy-nosed wombat, thought to number less than 150 in the wild.

The southern hairy-nosed wombat, which is not endangered, can be found mainly in South Australia. It has suffered a similar loss in habitat to the endangered northern hairy-nosed wombat, through what researchers say is the result of European settlement, agriculture and vermin such as the rabbit.

Using innovative techniques, Ms Walker is attempting to answer long-standing questions about the biology of the wombat, a difficult task due to its size and nocturnal, trappy, nature. "Ms Walker's use of a simple yet effective method of gathering samples for DNA testing, which does not require trapping or taking blood samples of the endangered northern hairy-nosed wombat, through what researchers say is the result of European settlement, agriculture and vermin such as the rabbit."

Continued on page 2
Peninsula $1.5 million student village opens

The completion of the facility, which is located at the rear of the campus on land adjoining the new hockey field, means the campus can now accommodate up to 105 students.

The village is one of the first major projects of the recently established Monash Residential Services, which oversees student accommodation at the Berwick, Caulfield, Clayton and Peninsula campuses. Monash Residential Services director Mr Vladimir Prijep said the accommodation provided a valuable opportunity for students to develop peer networks when they come to university.

"Most students who live on campus usually come from regional Victoria, interstate or overseas," he said.

Secure and convenient - The new accommodation consists of five houses, each offering six single bedrooms.

State Library director joins Monash

Monash University has appointed the former director of the State Library of Victoria to manage its extensive network of libraries. Ms Cathrine Harboe-Ree (pictured), who took up her position at Monash last month, said she looked forward to her new role, by which she aimed to see an even greater implementation of new technologies.

"It is exciting to come into an organisation already geared towards change and experimentation, exploring new approaches to customer service and technology," Ms Harboe-Ree said.

"We are well into the digital revolution and we are able to see that this will change information management and scholarly communication profoundly, which is both challenging and exciting."

"University library staff of the future will play a much more active role, working with academics and students to sift through the huge amount of information to collect, produce and deliver just what is needed, when it is needed."

As University Librarian, Ms Harboe-Ree is responsible for all the libraries across Monash's six Victorian campuses, as well as the library of the South Africa campus. She will also be working in partnership with the library at Monash University's Malaysian campus.

Ms Harboe-Ree graduated with a Bachelor of Social Science (Librarianship) from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and completed a Certificate of Business Administration at Swinburne University of Technology.

She has held a number of key roles in the private and business administration at the State Library, including director of Communications and Marketing, Director of Information and Services and director of Collections and Services. She has also worked for the former Victorian Ministry for the Arts (now Arts Victoria) and numerous municipal libraries.

DNA used in battle to save the wombat

"What we don't know yet is why this is occurring - what age, social or ecological factors are at play."

While it is known that when wombat populations become isolated they are in danger of becoming extinct, Mr Walker said, there was no clear understanding of how isolation affects them.

"I've also found that many populations that appear to be isolated are not necessarily genetically different from neighbouring ones," he said.

It was important, he explained, to establish which populations were truly genetically isolated so they could be used as genetic groups and compared to the small and genetically isolated population of northern hairy-nosed wombats.

"If we can find out how southern hairy-nosed wombats are responding behaviourally to isolation, then we will have a better idea of how to manage their southern counterparts."
AMREP opening to boost research and education

Monash University has joined with exciting new collaboration between autoimmunity, cancer, allergy, immunodeficiencies and transplantation.

The opening of the new Alfred Medical Research and Education Precinct (AMREP) will give medical research and education at Monash University a boost and potentially attract strong commercial support from the biotechnology and pharmaceutical industries.

The new $93 million complex was opened on 23 May by Victorian Premier Mr Steve Bracks and Health Minister Mr John Thwaites. It will offer state-of-the-art equipment and provide the Monash Medical School with at least three new floors of laboratories, offices, seminar rooms and shared facilities, including a new library.

According to Monash's dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, Professor Nick Saunders, the complex represents an exciting new collaboration between Australia's leading medical institutions.

He said Monash would play a key role in establishing the new facility as one of the leading academic medical centres in Australia.

"With the completion of AMREP, Monash University's medical research will continue to spearhead developments in the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of disease for all Australians," Professor Saunders said.

"Monash Medical School and other research organisations at The Alfred have enjoyed a fruitful relationship over four decades, with a strong collaboration of teaching and research expertise, developing many of Australia's finest young doctors, scientists and clinical investigators.

"The combination of two of Victoria's leading medical research institutes, a major teaching hospital and a leading university in the one complex will cement our reputation as leaders in Australian medicine."

The major clinical focus of current research at AMREP is in the areas of autoimmunity, cancer, allergy, immunodeficiencies and transplantation.

The Monash research and teaching component of AMREP will come from the departments of Pathology and Immunology; Medicine; Surgery; and Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine.

The head of the Central and Eastern Clinical School and the Department of Medicine at Monash Medical School, Alfred Hospital, Professor Napper Thomson, said the establishment of AMREP would facilitate better integration of biomedical research between the organisations in The Alfred precinct.

"Researchers at Monash's Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences working within AMREP can now collaborate more effectively with other biomedical researchers in the precinct, sharing ideas, techniques, research equipment and other resources," Professor Thomson said.

Mary Viscoch

Search to end cycle of violence in Indigenous communities

Independent communities in both Australia and the US are finding new ways to deal with family violence, a survey by a Monash University PhD student has found.

Ms Kylie Cripps (pictured), from the Centre for Women's Studies and Gender Research in the Faculty of Arts, surveyed four indigenous communities - an urban and a rural community in Australia and an urban and a rural community in the US - for her PhD dissertation, Indigenous communities surviving family violence in the US and Australia.

Ms Cripps said she had believed that the US communities would be more advanced than their Australian counterparts in their approach to dealing with family violence, but she found that was not the case.

Her study has revealed that each community dealt with issues of family violence in ways that best suited its own needs.

Initiatives that had been established included a data entry system that would record all occurrences of family violence, a support program to help victims, a satellite clinic that could be accessed by neighbouring communities and a dedicated law enforcement officer to deal specifically with "elder abuse".

Ms Cripps said the tribal communities in the US approached the issues from a different perspective because of its existing structure.

"Because they have sovereignty over their land, with more power to regulate the behaviour of their communities through local laws, they had a better opportunity to do what they felt was right," Ms Cripps said.

Ms Cripps, who was awarded a Daniel Scott Postgraduate Award for Indigenous Australians in 1999 and a Fulbright Scholarship in 2000/2001, said that in each of the communities the most important aspect of dealing with family violence was to listen to all members of the community, including both the survivors and the perpetrators.

"A lot of it has to do with communication within the community," she said.

Diane Squires

Ms Margaret Tighe talks stem cells with Professor Alan Trounson. Photo Peter Anikijenko.

Debate tackles stem cell controversy

A panel of prominent advocates and opponents of stem cell research involving human embryos presented a lively and entertaining debate on the issue during Monash University's Vice-Chancellor's Debate held last month.

Arguing the case 'That human embryos should be used for stem cell research' were deputy director of the Monash Institute of Reproduction and Development Professor Alan Trounson, director of the ethics program at the Murdoch Institute at the Royal Children's Hospital Professor Julian Savulescu and Monash biotech masters candidate Ms Angela Bollottyn.

Taking the negative position were Right to Life president Ms Margaret Tighe and biotech consultant with the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne Ms Anna Krohn.

Established in 1995 and sponsored by Monash University vice-chancellor Professor Nick Saunders, the debate is an annual event. Past notable speakers have included Professor Peter Singer, Reverend Tom Costello and Senator Lyne Allison.

A slam dunk for Monash South Africa Open Day

Prospective students had a taste of university life at the Monash South Africa Open Day on 11 May. More than 500 people visited the campus, taking part in a range of activities to learn about the university. Visitors were given a tour of the facilities by current Monash students and were encouraged to discuss their questions with staff from student services. The event was also used to showcase the campus's new basketball courts, with teams from local schools invited to play against a Monash team.
HEALTH RESEARCH

Despite an increase in the number of people seeking health information and medicines on the Internet, little is known about the associated benefits or risks, according to a Monash University researcher.

Ms Tracey Bessell, from the Monash Institute of Health Services Research (MIHSR), is investigating consumer experiences of online health information and the sale of medicines via the Internet as part of her PhD research project.

"The Internet is revolutionising the way medicines and information are delivered to consumers, but there is a lack of rigorous research about the true impact of health information and services delivered in this way," she said.

"About a quarter of 15 to 24-year-olds look for information about health on the Internet. We need to know how, when and why people seek online health information and what effect it has on their relationship with health care providers and, most importantly, on their health outcomes."

Ms Bessell said she believed that while the Internet was a useful tool, her research had so far found that it required careful consideration by consumers.

"Using the Internet for health information has real benefits, including getting a 'second opinion', anonymity and around-the-clock access to information, but there are significant downsides," she said.

"Making health care decisions based on information provided over the Internet can be risky because much of it is inaccurate, commercially influenced, out of date or not evidence-based."

"It is also sometimes difficult to determine exactly who is providing the information and whether they are properly qualified and unbiased in their views."

She warned that consumer-driven demand for online health information increased, both consumers and health professionals would need to be able to easily identify and critically appraise the quality of online information.

In addition, she said, the market for online medicines had the potential to expand rapidly, despite an initial reluctance by consumers to buy online. "Given the likelihood that this area will grow, we need to ensure that consumers are being adequately safeguarded from fraudulent operators.

Ms Bessell is currently recruiting people who have bought medicines via the Internet to take part in her research, which is being funded by a Quality Use of Medicines Scholarship from the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care.

Her research had been supervised by the late Professor Chris Silagy and is currently being supervised by Associate Professor Jeremy Anderson from MIHSR, Professor Janet Hiller from Adelaide University and Professor Lloyd Sassoon from the University of South Australia.

Those wishing to participate in Ms Bessell’s research can contact her by email at traceyb@med.monash.edu.au or visit www.med.monash.edu.au/research/.

Mary Visovich

Study to reveal tax burden on small business operators

How small business has fared under the 1999 Ralph taxation reforms is the focus of a collaborative study by researchers at Monash University and the University of New South Wales.

The comprehensive three-year study, led by Monash law researcher Associate Professor John Glover and Dr Binh Tran-Nam, an economist from the University of New South Wales, is examining the tax advantages and disadvantages of the 1999 reforms, and whether those reforms unfavourable to small business have been offset by reduced taxation compliance costs.

The research will explore whether the assumptions the government made to sell the reforms to small business were justified and will look at ways of fine-tuning the reform process.

The project investigates regional and small rural and small businesses across Australia have volunteered to take part in the study.

Participating business owners are being measured by means of a series of structured interviews based on questionnaires. Participants are also being asked to keep a logbook of the amount of time spent on business tax affairs.

According to Dr Glover, compliance costs have been shown to be particularly regressive for the small business sector. "Many small businesses have claimed that quarterly reporting has added to their overheads, making staying in business unfeasible," he said.

"The results of our study are expected to assist in fine-tuning the tax law for farms and other small businesses — an outcome that may lead to the adoption of a fairer and more efficient business tax structure in Australia."

"The results of a study examining the 1999 Ralph taxation reforms are expected to assist in fine-tuning tax law for farms and other small businesses. Photo Newspix.

Fiona Perry

LAW

The results of a study examining the 1999 Ralph taxation reforms are expected to assist in fine-tuning tax law for farms and other small businesses — an outcome that may lead to the adoption of a fairer and more efficient business tax structure in Australia."

"The internet is revolutionising the way health information and health care are made available, but people may not be aware that there is a lack of rigorous research about the true impact of health information on their relationship with health care providers and, most importantly, on their health outcomes."

Ms Bessell warned that consumer-driven demand for online health information increased, both consumers and health professionals would need to be able to easily identify and critically appraise the quality of online information.

In addition, she said, the market for online medicines had the potential to expand rapidly, despite an initial reluctance by consumers to buy online. "Given the likelihood that this area will grow, we need to ensure that consumers are being adequately safeguarded from fraudulent operators.

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Mary Visovich
I N 1991-1992, I became concerned by the way discussions about corruption became part of the struggle between military dictators and civilian regimes in Thailand for power in Thailand by coup in 1991. Righteous anger in the press and newsletters of even worse behaviour. Military dictators, who had a record of spectacular corruption in the past, could not be expected to stop. Moreover, they were satisfied with the services they receive. We found that bribe-taking is concentrated in a small number of offices, but here the amounts are truly large. We have been successful in identifying most of the total corruption income.

We found that most of the total corruption money came in the form of big bribes (not petty squeeze), that is, the sums paid to officials by businesspeople, the transport department which controls vehicle licensing, and the police. Five offices accounted for 95 per cent of the total corruption income.

One example of a study of this kind is the Chulalongkorn University series of studies on corruption and related issues. Here I highlight two of the important findings.

First, corruption in Thailand is highly focused and specific. In 1999, we carried out a survey of household experiences in corruption, with a representative sample of more than 4,000 households all over the country. We found that the vast majority of people do not have to pay squeeze money at government offices, public utilities and other such places and that generally they are satisfied with the services they receive. We found that bribe-taking is concentrated in a small number of offices, but here the amounts are truly large. These offices are those that have influence over significant monetary transactions - namely the land department, the tax and customs offices, the transport department which controls vehicle licensing, and the police. These five offices accounted for 95 per cent of the total corruption income.

That may seem to suggest that most of the corruption money came in the form of big bribes (not petty squeeze), that is, the sums paid to officials by businesspeople, the transport department which controls vehicle licensing, and the police. Five offices accounted for 95 per cent of the total corruption income.

In short, most corruption in Thailand is about business deals. The parties involved are businesspeople and the bureaucrats and political officeholders who are in a position to influence business deals. There is also some gate-keeping and racketeering in the police, but the big issue is the problem of the interface between business and government.

The second finding is about money politics. In the Corruption and Democracy study, we looked at the money flows in Thai politics. There is no doubt that the democratic politics that developed over the 1980s and 1990s involved large money flows. Parliamentary candidates invested large sums in getting elected. Indeed, by standards of the West, the huge sums of unreported expenditure on a Thai general election is equal to the official expenditure on a US presidential campaign. This, of course, is quite bizarre.

Party leaders have to offer cash to attract good electoral candidates. Recently, we have had so-called 'tertiary formulae', like 5-10-10-20, which indicate the sums (in millions of baht) a candidate will receive when he expends interest (five million), when he signs up to join the party (10 million), when he succeeds in getting elected (10 million), and so on. We also know that leaders have to pay retainers to keep their parties together, that money boxes have sometimes been paid for votes on parliamentary motions, and that, of course, these expenditures have to be recouped. We also know that senior posts in the bureaucracy are often up for sale and that again such investments need to be recouped.

That still didn't seem to explain the spectacular amounts, but it gave us a hint: the explanation for the high amounts invested in money politics would probably be found outside politics - in business. Moreover, the highest levels of profit come from businesses which are illegal. Perhaps, then, there was a connection between money politics and the illegal economy.

That train of thought led to our study of Thailand's illegal economy. We looked at illegal gambling, gaming, drugs, prostitution, smuggling and human trafficking. We tried to estimate the scale of these businesses. We suggested the returns to which these businesses operate because they are protected and promoted by people who have economic and bureaucratic power. We managed to detail the links between money flows in some of the illegal economy and money flows in politics. But we did not identify specific people involved - largely because we wanted to stay alive.

The response to the study suggested we had got the basic pattern right. A number of people got rather angry, particularly the politicians. One seni,or, and straight, political figure came out to say that he had always been penned by the size of position buying and investing in politics and felt that this study put the jigsaw puzzle in place.

Our studies suggest a rather different viewpoint. Corruption in Thailand seems to be mainly about the intersection between business and politics. Businessmen buy opportunities and favours. Officeholders sell opportunities and favours. Officeholders and businessmen want access to political power because it affects their profits. In a democratic system, that access is transacted through both the parliamentary and bureaucratic systems. Where these transactions are not governed by any set of rules, we tend to call them corruption.

To put it another way, in any capitalistic economy, businesses want access to political power because it affects their profits. In a democratic system, that access is transacted through both the parliamentary and bureaucratic systems. Where these transactions are not governed by any set of rules, we tend to call them corruption.

'To return again to the agenda of international organisations, we agree with them that we need the rules, institutions, punishments, checks and balances to control corruption. Indeed, Thailand's 1997 constitution has introduced many new and appropriate innovations.

But we don't share the belief that rules and institutions can make corruption disappear. We believe they can help bring corruption down to levels that are acceptable or manageable. But we also think that such rules and institutions on their own are only part of the story. We need to think more closely about the connection between business and politics.
New exhibition explores loss on a global scale

While emotions surrounding the death of a loved one can be overwhelming for most people, one artist has been able to channel her grief into a powerful message for environmental protection.

According to Ms Marian Crawford, whose work will be on show at Monash University's Gippsland campus this month, the effect of global warming on the icebergs of Antarctica and the destruction of coral reefs in both Australia and around the world. She said the power of her emotions in response to the loss of her parents was a revelation to her.

"Just as Antarctica is the least explored continent of our planet, grief was an unexplored emotion for me. I felt there were certain parallels with the enormity of this emotion and the awe inspired by the vastness and the mystery of Antarctica. I felt a need to explore this through my art," Ms Crawford said.

Ms Crawford used pieces of paper, which she joined together and then cut, to create large paper icebergs.

"The icebergs are about the size of a person - about 1.5m tall and 40 or 70cm wide - and each has been named after people I have known who have died in the past five years," she said.

In addition to representations of icebergs, other works on display in the exhibition, Other Treasures, are based on Ms Crawford's concerns about the destruction of coral reefs in both Australia and around the world.

They include more than 200 white paper cutouts, created to represent the endangered creatures that live on the Great Barrier Reef and the bleaching of coral.

"These dungeons are real - our reefs and the wilderness of Antarctica are possibly in jeopardy because of the impact humans have had on these environments. It is a loss we will all share," she said.

The exhibition will run at the Switchback Gallery from 4 to 14 June. For more information, contact the gallery on +61 3 9902 6261.

Australian artists step into the blue

Work by six leading artists will be showcased in a new exhibition at the Monash University Museum of Art at the Clayton campus this month.

Featuring new pieces by Sarah Elson, Chenenne Falah, Robert Pulle and others, Into the Blue is an exhibition held together by a shared theme rather than a theme.

Instead of selecting artworks according to a specific subject matter or topic, each of the artists has chosen pieces that show the light, humour and unpredictable side of their art. Into the Blue will run from 25 June to 24 August. For more information, contact +61 3 9905 4217 or visit www.monash.edu.au/mums.

Mum's the word in comedy

"As a parent, you often spend a lot of time alone with your child, and sometimes it can seem that you are the only ones facing these difficulties - but you're not. This show helps to highlight that each of us share similar experiences and heartaches." - Derek Brown

The 2000 cast of Mum's the Word provide a humorous and often brutally honest look at parenting.

"Through the stories of six women, Mum's the Word, brought to Monash by Picture This Productions in association with the Glen Eira Theatre, gives a humorous and often brutally honest look at parenting.

According to producer Ms Sandy Paterson, the performance focuses on the taboos of parenthood and, in doing so, validates the experience of being a mother or a father.

"The show is important because it allows parents, and especially mothers, to talk openly and to laugh and relate to the experiences of having and looking after children," she said.

"As a parent, you often spend a lot of time alone with your child, and sometimes it can seem that you are the only ones facing these difficulties - but you're not. This show helps to highlight that each of us share similar experiences and heartaches."

Ms Paterson believes the theatre production helps parents put the day-to-day events of looking after children into perspective.

"Often incidents such as having to discipline your child or losing sight of them in a crowd can be daunting, depressing and confronting, but when you put the scenario up on stage, people can stand back from their own emotions and see the funny side," she said.

Mum's the World has proven popular with audiences across Australia and has had sell-out seasons in both metropolitan and regional areas.

For Ms Paterson, the show's popularity is an indication of the universality of many aspects of parenting.

"I think being a parent is one of the few things that actually do cross cultural and socioeconomic barriers - no matter what country you live in or how many degrees you have, your baby is still going to wake up in the middle of the night," she said.

What: Mum's the Word
Where: Alexander Theatre
When: 13 to 15 June
For more information, contact the booking office on +61 3 9905 1111.

Bringing the bush to life

Adventurous bush fairy and deviser Bernadette Moulten is set to entertain visitors to Monash University's Clayton campus early next month when the Alexander Theatre presents Snugglepot and Cuddlepie.

An Australian children's classic, May Gibbs' well-loved characters will be brought to life in a new exhibition at Monash's Clayton campus this month.

"May Gibbs' well-loved characters will be brought to life in Snugglepot and Cuddlepie. The work is set to be showcased in a new exhibition at the Monash University Museum of Art at the Clayton campus this month.

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Derek Brown
Love by the book

Love is a many splendoured thing.

Focus of Dr Armstrong's research and the subject of his new book, The Conditions of Love: The Philosophy of Intimacy, has for the past few years been the reverence our society places on love, which says, has survived from 500 BC.

"Love creates its own problems. It involves getting very close to someone, and nearer, no matter how perfect the relationship at first, is without its faults," he said.

According to Dr Armstrong, true love is based on sustained and honest intimacy, and does not reflect the romantic, idealized notions that people are often attracted to.

"Love is not just about finding someone, it's about finding someone who respects you and has faith in you. It's about finding someone who will support you when you need it," he said.

The modern symphony took a hushed as the auditorium darkens and the first notes of a symphony written by Monash music honours student, Mr Small, is heard.

"It's an amorphous piece, with a lot of moments of silence, which are the result of the music being played by mobile phones." Mr Small said.

"It's an opportunity to allow people to experience art in a new way, and to make music part of their everyday lives," he said.

Unsanctifying Human Life: Essays on Ethics

By Peter Singer, Edited by Helga Kuhse

Published by Blackwell Publishers, 2015

The text shows that during 1939-1941, the Menzies government was very hostile to the Jewish community of Palestine and put pressure on Britain to adopt a much harsher policy against Jewish refugees from Nazi-occupied Europe who wished to go to Palestine.

Also explored is Australia's support of British and American policies and the period during which Australia became pro-Israel.

Dr Chanan Reich is a visiting scholar and lecturer at the Centre for the Study of Jewish Civilisation at Monash University and a lecturer in political science at the Tel Aviv-Yafo Academic College in Israel. Although now living in Israel, he lived and worked in Australia for 20 years.
Health of blue-collar workers under spotlight

The health of Victorian blue-collar workers will be examined in a major study to be undertaken by Monash University lecturer Dr Anthony LaMontagne. The project, which is expected to start this month, will investigate issues associated with high behavioural risks, such as smoking or lack of physical exercise, and adverse working conditions among low-wage workers.

As part of the project, new intervention strategies are expected to be developed to protect and promote the health of Victorian blue-collar workers.

Dr LaMontagne, senior lecturer in the university's Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine, has been awarded a Victorian Asbestos-related Disease Research Project Fellowship of $165,000 a year for five years to undertake the study.

He will work with the Victorian Trades Hall to conduct an initial survey of 800 people and an in-depth qualitative interview of 40 people to identify relationships between health behavior and job stress.

In a second part of the project, Dr LaMontagne will work with members of the Latrobe Valley community to develop integrated health promotion and health protection programs focusing on the burden of asbestos-related disease.

He will also work with the Gippsland Asbestos-Related Disease Support Group to formulate community-based approaches to asbestos disease and smoking.

"Former and current power industry workers in the Latrobe Valley are three times more likely to quit smoking than other Victorians to experience an asbestos-related disease," he said.

The Latrobe Valley study will formulate community-level measures and workplace interventions which target current employees.

The project builds on research undertaken by Dr LaMontagne and Professor Glorian Sorensen and colleagues at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and Harvard School of Public Health in the US, where Dr LaMontagne worked before moving to Australia two years ago.

In this work, it was found that workplace interventions were addressed in conjunction with health promotion, blue-collar workers were twice as likely to quit smoking as those who had only taken part in health promotion programs.

"Healthy working environments are as important in preventing chronic diseases as adopting positive health behaviours - working conditions are an under-recognised and substantial contributor to chronic disease burdens," Dr LaMontagne said.

"By broadening the traditional emphasis of health promotion on individual behaviors to include addressing healthy working conditions, a more comprehensive and effective approach to preventing chronic diseases can be realised."

Diane Squires

Thai anti-corruption crusader receives award

Following two decades of pioneering investigations and research into the Thai illegal economy, Monash alumnus Professor Pasuk Phongpaichit was last month presented with a Monash University Distinguished Alumni Award in recognition of her efforts.

The highly acclaimed Thai economist's published work has reached far outside the university to the very core of Thai society, opening up discussion, especially on the Thai media, on the issue of corruption.

"I want to broaden people's view of our society and encourage them to think democratically," Dr Pasuk said.

Currently working in the Faculty of Economics at Chulalongkorn University, Thailand, and as a member of Thailand's Counter-Corruption Commission, Professor Pasuk visited Monash last month to receive her award and present a seminar on 'Confronting corruption' at the Monash Asia Institute.

Her research has exposed the extent to which institutional corruption and intimidation affect the free and fair contesting of the public good, opening up access to the Thai economy.

In doing so, she has earned a reputation as one of Asia's most courageous and outspoken scholars, emboldening others to write about corruption and bringing the debate into the public domain.

Professor Pasuk was awarded a Colombo Plan scholarship to Monash in 1965, where she completed a bachelor's degree (with honours) in economics and a master's in 1968, followed by a Colombo Plan scholarship to Cambridge to undertake a PhD in 1976.

While at Monash, Professor Pasuk conducted research into wages and economic development with specific reference to Thailand, and later undertook a study of social movements in Thailand.

She has also held teaching posts at the University of Cambridge and the prestigious Johns Hopkins University in the US.

"Monash exposed me to a very democratic and liberal way of thinking, which made me appreciate the power of ordinary people," she recalled, citing the Australian trade union movement as a good example of people's power to change things.

Monash University Distinguished Alumni Awards are awarded to Monash graduates or diplomates who have demonstrated outstanding professional achievements, inspirational leadership and exceptional human qualities.

Former winners include Reserve Bank of Australia governor Dr Ross McEnnan (1985), Aboriginal spokesperson Mr Mick Dodson (1996) and author and social commentator Reverend Tim Costello.

Professor Phongpaichit's opinion piece on beating corruption in Thailand can be found on page 5.

Konrad Marshall

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