The high price of gastro

HEALTH

Gastroenteritis costs Australia more than $342 million each year in treatments and lost work time, a Monash University study has found.

This enormous cost to the community, which equates to more than $18 per person a year, has highlighted the need for ongoing research so that the main causes of endemic gastroenteritis can be identified and the cost of the disease to the community reduced.

The study, by researchers in the Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine, has provided the most accurate cost of gastroenteritis to the community reduced.

Researchers Dr Margaret Hellard and Dr Martha Sinclair looked specifically at endemic gastroenteritis in Australia rather than outbreaks of gastroenteritis.

Endemic gastroenteritis has become an important illness in developed and developing countries," Dr Hellard said.

"Although in developed countries the cost of outbreaks is measured in millions of dollars, many more cases of endemic gastroenteritis are missed. These cases cause illness that becomes an economic burden to our community," Dr Hellard said.

The cost for time off work to care for a person who visited their doctor, took medication or had time off work.

Researchers Dr Margaret Hellard and Dr Martha Sinclair looked specifically at endemic gastroenteritis in Australia rather than outbreaks of gastroenteritis.

"If we want to reduce the cost and prevalence of community gastroenteritis, we need to take into account the common sources of endemic gastroenteritis and not simply rely on data from outbreaks of gastroenteritis," Dr Hellard said.

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“The centre is regarded worldwide as a leader in research into injury prevention including, of course, road safety” he said.

“We are undertaking a number of other projects around the world, but to be successful with the one organisation in these six key projects – each designed to expose the current state of knowledge in a critical area – shows how highly the centre’s work is regarded,” Dr Johnston said.

While much of the research is in its early stages, MUARC has just completed nine in five project looking at measures to increase the use of bicycle helmets.

MUARC reviewed helmet use throughout the world and found that across most cultures the lowest rate of helmet-wearing was among adolescents aged 13 to 17.

“That’s not surprising,” Dr Johnston said. “But what we didn’t expect to find was that the higher the level of bike-riding in a given country, the lower the level of helmet wearing. For example, the lowest helmet-wearing rates were in Holland, where cycling is at very high levels. Moreover, an country with high bicycle use had mandated helmet wearing.”

In countries such as Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and Canada, where cycling was not very common, the number of people wearing helmets varied from very high, where helmet wearing was compulsory, to relatively low, in the absence of legislation.

- Diane Squires

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IN BRIEF

US funds for prostate research
Monash University’s Institute of Reproduction and Development has been awarded $800,000 to investigate the role of adult stem cells in the incidence of prostate disease.

One of the first successful applications worldwide made to the Department of Defence Project Cancer Research Program in the US.

The project will examine whether adult stem cells can be used to regenerate damaged kidneys that may improve kidney health.

The project, funded from a field of 18 applications, will receive funding of $200,000 a year for five years.

Monash Law

A course that teaches lawyers how to write in a professional manner has been awarded $1 million by the Australian Law Foundation to investigate how kidney health can be improved.

The funding has been awarded to the University of New South Wales (UNSW) to examine South African law

Human rights specialist to examine South African law

Research

United Nations volunteer researcher Mr Tetsuro Yoshida has joined the Centre for Law and Reconciliation in Southern Africa (CLARISA) at Monash’s South Africa campus.

Mr Yoshida specialises in public international law focusing on human rights issues and will spend the next two years with CLARISA in a research capacity.

He will analyse the development of the principles of human rights contained in the South African Constitution in light of this body of law.

Mr Yoshida has worked at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Embassy of Japan, in Paris and at Foreign Affairs in Tokyo.

Director of CLARISA Professor Theo Schrepfer said Mr Yoshida’s work formed part of ongoing research done by the centre to provide advice and education on human rights and the law, both generally in the development process in Africa and more specifically in the development of local government process in South Africa.

One of CLARISA’s key aims is to ensure that people from all levels of society have access to the law.

- Jennifer Smit

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Protein success brings organ transplant hope

MEDICINE

In a development that could lead to greater success with organ transplants, Monash University scientists, working in collaboration with the University of Melbourne, have solved the structure of an immune system protein that is crucial in keeping Epstein Barr Virus (EBV) infections in check.

About 90 per cent of the population is infected with EBV — a virus that usually produces no symptoms but, particularly in teenagers, EBV infections can lead to fever, swollen glands and, in some cases, even cancer.

Now, researchers from Monash's Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology and Melbourne University's Immunology Department have used x-ray crystallography to reveal the three-dimensional shape of the protein receptor, called a T-cell receptor, which stops EBV from wreaking havoc in the body.

They have used the same technique to solve the structure of a molecule called HLA B8, which transports EBV to the surface of cells where the virus is recognised and suppressed by the T-cell receptor.

The research, which was a collaboration between Dr Jamie Rossjohn and Dr Craig Clements from Monash and Professor James McCluskey and Dr Lars Riehl-Nielsen from the University of Melbourne, was recently published in the international journal Immunity.

It is the third protein structure to be determined by Monash's Protein Crystallography Unit, which was set up only 12 months ago.

Dr Rossjohn said the findings gave great insight into the function of the T-cell receptor in the body and might also lead to products that could reduce the rates of organ transplant rejection.

The T-cell receptor we have studied interacts with Epstein Barr Virus and stops it from running rampant through the body but, in some transplant patients, the response can also interact with molecules in the organ being transplanted and contribute to it being rejected,” Dr Rossjohn said.

Before an organ transplant, patients are HLA typed (a process similar to blood typing) to check that the donor and the recipient are immunologically compatible.

About 25 per cent of the Caucasian population is HLA type B44. There are several variants of HLA B44, and some of these can cause problems for organ recipients who are HLA type B4.

In the case of Epstein Barr Virus infection, T-cell receptors bind to HLA B8 to stop the infection taking hold. But when a HLA B44 organ is donated to a HLA B8 patient, the T-cell receptors sometimes interact with the B44 molecules and causes transplant rejection.

"Now that we know the structure of the T-cell receptor, we can also begin to understand the molecular basis for transplant rejection,” Dr Rossjohn said. "If we can find a general mechanism for immune recognition of foreign tissues, then perhaps this can be blocked so that transplant can proceed without fear of rejection.

The National Health and Medical Research Council and the Wellcome Trust funded the research.

Program will picture children learning

EDUCATION

A Monash University Faculty of Education program to improve literacy and numeracy skills for young people newly arrived in Australia has received almost $40,000 from the Federal Government.

The Immigrants and Initiatives Project was launched last week by the Federal Minister for Education, Science and Training, Dr Brendan Nelson, as part of the Innovative Projects Initiative 2002.

The project was one of 10 initiatives across the country to share in $400,000 of funding.

Professor Marilyn Fleer and her team from the Education faculty will work in consultation with the Hargraves community to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of up to 200 pre-schoolers. Members of the team include Dr Barbara Clarke, Ms Marie Hantos, Ms Anne Kennedy, Ms Avi's Ridgeway, Ms Jill Robbins, Dr Lynne Summ and Education dean Professor Sue Willis.

Staff of child care centres and schools, as well as the families of children who attend them, will document literacy and numeracy experiences of the children by photographing them undertaking various activities in the home, community and the centres and preschools.

Professor Fleer said these images would document the range of ways in which children become literate and numerate. Effective teaching and learning strategies will be identified through pre- and post-project testing of the children.

GRANTS

Academics from Monash University's Faculty of Science who are returning from maternity leave can now apply for a $15,000 grant on their return to assist in their research endeavours.

"The aim of this project is to identify reforms which will protect and strengthen parliamento legitimacy," Dr Lewis said. "We are gravely concerned that the decline in the reputation and standing member was a concern about the community's declining lack of trust in politicians."

"Protecting the reputation and standing member was a concern about the community's lack of trust in politicians," Dr Lewis said. "We are gravely concerned that the decline in the standing of parliament aimed to identify gaps in the community's interests."

"The aim of this project is to identify reforms which will protect and strengthen parliamento legitimacy." - Dr Lewis

"The aim of this project is to identify reforms which will protect and strengthen parliamento legitimacy." - Dr Lewis
Reputation fuels demand for places

A global view of Australia

Strong student demand for entry into health and medical courses as well as engineering at Monash University has reflected its growing reputation as an international centre of excellence in biotechnology and engineering.

This year, Monash, through the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre, made 7302 offers for HECS-funded undergraduate places and 920 offers for full-fee places. International student applications are still being processed.

The demand for entry into medicine-related courses such as Biomedical Science, Pharmacy, Nutrition and Dietetics, Radiography and Medical Imaging, Nursing and Behavioural Neuroscience from Monash's highest qualified students pushed the cut-off scores up for these courses at Monash this year.

The cut-off score for Nutrition and Dietetics has risen from 2.6 points to 95.5 and Behavioural Neuroscience from 96.5 points to 96.85. Medicine also experienced a surge in demand, with a 32 per cent rise in students listing it as their first preference.

Specialist engineering courses and combined engineering courses also experienced an increase in student demand. The cut-off for Environmental Engineering rose from 96.45 to 96.77 and Engineering/Aerospace rose from 96.15 to 96.65. Art, Engineering and Computer Systems Engineering were also popular among students.

Professor Alan Lindsay, deputy vice-chancellor (Academic and Planning), said student demand for medicine and engineering-themed courses reflected students' awareness of the university's expertise in research areas such as stem cell science and materials engineering.

The university has established a worldwide reputation as a leader in many aspects of medicine and engineering and our research community is thriving," Professor Lindsay said. "Students are responding to this news and are choosing undergraduate courses that will allow them to become involved in these exciting and rapidly evolving fields.

"We also believe they are attracted to the university's significant commitment to science infrastructure - Australia's first synchrotron, is to be built at Monash and stage one of our Science Technology Research and Innovation Precinct is almost complete."

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Radio series looks at our place in the modern world

YOUTH FORUM
An international youth forum looking at the world since September 11 and the Bali bombings will conclude a 13-part radio series on contemporary Australia being planned by Monash University.

The series is being produced by the AIRC's Radio Australia in collaboration with Monash's National Key Centre for Australian Studies. The centre will provide academic research and expertise to Radio Australia for each topic in the series.

Project advisor, and Monash lecturer Mr Chris Baker said the idea of the series was to provide a balanced view of Australia to international audiences.

"This is a warm-and-fuzzy look at Australia - the idea is to produce a multifaceted package on contemporary Australia," he said.

"We are trying to interpret Australia to the outside world, in response to misconceptions about this country and its people."

Programs in the series look at tourist images of Australia, Indigenous culture and land rights issues, the environment, land care, education, foreign relations and the changing political and economic face of Australia.

While the radio series, which began in April, will not be aired in Australia, it will be broadcast throughout Asia via Radio Australia's network and satellite services and is destined for North America via the World Radio Network. The programs will also be adapted into Chinese and Indonesian.

The series will be linked to a Monash academic subject called 'Contemporary Australia', which is funded by Open Learning Australia.

The youth forum will feature students from Australia and America discussing a broad range of issues including globalization, cross-cultural understanding and perceptions of religion, including Islam.

Monash University students will also take part in the forum, which is being co-hosted by the National Museum in Canberra and the Smithsonian Institute in Washington.

The forum will be held at the National Museum in Canberra in May.

Mr Baker said it was anticipated that the Prime Minister, Mr John Howard, would be in attendance, and decision-makers from Washington would join in providing young people with the opportunity of asking questions.

"Our students have the power of two nations - a nation of 20 million citizens and a nation of 300 million citizens - and we want them to share their experiences with us." - Diane Squires

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VCE and Careers Expo 2003

Monash University is one of the major sponsors of the VCE and Careers Expo 2003, which will be held at this year's Caulfield Race Course from 21 to 23 March.

The university invites all schools and prospective students to visit the Monash Australia stand. Staff from the Prospective Students Office and faculties will provide information on courses and how to apply.

During the three days of the Caulfield race course will be available to schools and small groups. Schools interested in a tour of the Caulfield campus on Friday 21 March should contact Ms Jodie Martin-Blick on +61 3 9905 3150.

Small group tours, led by current Monash students, will be available on 22 and 23 March for individuals and families. Parents are available for attendees who wish to re-enter the expo at the conclusion of the tour.

Faculty-specific seminars will be held at the expo as follows:

• Arts, Education (Sports and Outdoor Recreation), Art and Design, Tuesday 22 March, 10.30 am to 11.30 am
• Law, Information Technology, Medicine and Health Sciences, Sunday 23 March, 11.30 am to 12.30 pm.

‘At Monash’ Seminar Series

The ‘At Monash’ Seminar Series provides senior students with the opportunity to explore Monash faculties at a number of seminars, faculty representatives will offer advice and information about the degree programs and courses that interest them.

The seminars are at most suitable for students in Years 11 and 12.

This year, two new seminars have been introduced - Art and Design and Pharmaceutical and Chemical Sciences at the Parkville campus. Although psychology is taught by the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, it will also be covered in the Arts and Science seminar because of its popularity as a major in the degrees offered by those faculties. The seminar schedule is:

• Medicine and Health Sciences, Wednesday 20 April, 7.30 pm to 9 pm, Clayton campus;
• Arts and Science (including psychology), Wednesday 27 May, 7.30 pm to 9 pm, Clayton campus;
• Pharmacy and related sciences, Thursday 2 May, 7.30 pm to 9 pm, Peninsula campus;
• Engineering and Information Technology, Thursday 2 May, 7.30 pm to 9 pm, Clayton campus;
• Nursing and Education, Tuesday 13 May, 7.30 pm to 9 pm, Peninsula campus;
• Arts and Science, including home economics, Tuesday 20 May, 7.30 pm to 9 pm, Clayton campus;
• Business and Economics, and Law, Tuesday 27 May, 7.30 pm to 9 pm, Clayton campus.

Small group tours will also be available on 22 and 23 March for individuals and families.

Online information sessions are also available for prospective students.

Bookings can be made online at www.monash.edu.au/psso or contact the Prospective Students Office on +61 3 9905 4164.
Despite recent rain, Australia continues to suffer the devastating effects of drought. And Monash University researchers have revealed the economic impact will be far worse than previously thought.

Diane Squires reports.

Economists from Monash University's Centre for Policy Studies, clockwise from top left, Dr Glyn Wittwer, Associate Professor John Madden, Dr Mark Horridge and Dr Phillip Adams.

Economists in Monash University's Centre of Policy Studies (CaPS) have warned that the drought is having a far greater impact on gross domestic product (GDP) than previously estimated.

Dr Mark Horridge, Associate Professor John Madden and Dr Glyn Wittwer.

They found that the 2002-03 GDP was likely to be 1.6 per cent less than it would have been in the absence of any drought.

It estimated that the drought, one of the most severe and most widespread over a nine-month period, would reduce agricultural output on average by almost 30 per cent in the current financial year. This fall is expected to reduce agricultural GDP by 4.2 per cent in addition to the 0.8 per cent reduction from crops.

Dr Madden said the second reason for the greater estimated effect on GDP was that the researchers used a 45-region economic model to estimate the flow-on effects to industries outside the agricultural sector.

The study also found that the drought was likely to reduce the average number of jobs in Australia in 2002-03 by 0.8 per cent.

Dr Wittwer said the drought was likely to reduce the average number of jobs by about 25,000 jobs, in business services (12,000 jobs), in the food processing and beverages sector (18,000 jobs) and in transport (9000 jobs).

The study found that the worst-affected regions were south-west Queensland (-21 per cent), north-west NSW (-16 per cent) and northern NSW (-15 per cent). Altogether 15 regions are projected to have their gross regional product (GRP) reduced by more than 5 per cent by the drought — 11 of them by over 10 per cent.

The worst-affected region, south-west Queensland, is projected to have its employment lowered by 3.5 per cent (compared with a reduction in GRP of 21 per cent). Another 15 regions are projected to have their employment reduced by 2 per cent or more as a result of the drought.

Australia's capital cities will also be affected by the drought, with employment expected to drop by 0.4 per cent in Melbourne and Perth and 0.8 per cent in Brisbane.

However, if the drought breaks in the next few months, as anticipated, few of the negative economic effects are expected to persist into 2003-04.

Dr Wittwer warned that an exception to this would be the livestock industries in some inland regions, which will take time to recover from the de-stocking that has occurred during the drought.

The study will be published in the next issue of Australian Bulletin of Labour.
Werewolf mythology on display at Gippsland

A growing fascination with her Lithuanian heritage following the death of her grandmother more than 10 years ago resulted in Ms Jazmina Cininas’ masterly work The Girlie Werewolf Project — Switchback Gallery’s first major exhibition for 2003.

Essentially about identity, the unusual exhibition features costumes, photographs, intricate prints and handmade books exploring wolf stereotypes as well as video references of the werewolf in contemporary film.

"In its current incarnation, the wolf has been represented as a women's champion. Of all the animals, the wolf

"The wolf exists on the edge of humanity. Tamed, it is a dog; if it is wild it can become a werewolf. It privileged position as 'limited human' and its shifting status in the popular imagination makes it a unique barometer for changing attitudes, not only towards the natural world and the environment but also in shifts in perceptions of women."

According to Ms Cininas, The Girlie Werewolf Project "is an attempt to create a personal werewolf mythlogy that acknowledges traditional and contemporary werewolf folklore, with particular reference to my Lithuanian background".

For the record, Ms Cininas says she is definitely not a werewolf.

— Karen Stichennon

SHOW NOTES
What: The Girlie Werewolf Project
When: Until 27 March
Special viewing and talk by artist: 11 March, 6 pm
Where: Switchback Gallery, Gippsland Centre for Art and Design, Gippsland campus
Who: For more information, contact us on +61 3 9902 6261.

Boarding house secrets

The mystery and secrets of living in Melbourne's boarding houses, hostels and flats early last century are uncovered in a new book, Together Apart, by Monash University historian Dr Seamus O’Hanlon.

"For a minority of Melburnians, 'home' was always a boarding house, hotel or flat," he said. "While circumstances often made the idea of 'ideal' suburban house unachievable, some simply preferred that way of life.

Dr O'Hanlon's interest in these types of residences in inner Melbourne, particularly those built before World War 2, was first sparked when he lived in inter-war flats during the 1980s and 1990s.

The book unveils fascinating aspects—both amusing and depressing—of the lives of those in such accommodation. While today society equates boarding houses with the poor and dispossessed, it was a very different story early last century.

Boarding houses were relatively common and provided accommodation for between 5 and 10 per cent of Melbourne's population, including the rich and famous," Dr O'Hanlon said.

He uncovered, for example, records of a spinner who lived in an affluent South Yarra boarding house for at least 28 years until her death in 1946. The situation was indicative of the boarding house culture: "She left an estate of almost 7500 pounds, but had virtually no personal belongings."

The book also traces the development of church-based hostels from the late 1910s to the 1920s — largely a result of boarding houses beginning to fall into disrepair and concern about the dangers of city life for young women moving to the city for work or study and whose gradual decline up to the 1950s.

Dr O'Hanlon said many at the time regarded the initial development of flats during the inter-war years as a disturbing example of non-traditional and social and living patterns, including the growing independence of women.

Similar issues are being faced today, he said, and we need to look at a variety of options for housing.

"We need to investigate new forms of dwelling types, including accommodation for those who want to live independently but not isolated, too."

"These may take the form of modified boarding houses or hotels with private bathrooms, but provision for shared meals and amenities."

"We need to redress that 'home' means different things to different people — for some it is a suburban brick villa, for others it is a hostel room, and for others it will be Docklands apartments."

— Allison Harding

Together Apart: Boarding House, Hotel and Flat Life in Inter-War Melbourne
By Seamus O’Hanlon
Published by Australian Scholarly Publishing
RRP: $44.95

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Author on residences: Dr Seamus O’Hanlon says that ‘home’ can mean different things to different people.

Photo: Greg Ford

Monash News, March 2003
Mavis launches performing arts program

The 2003 Monash University Performing Arts season began last month with an official launch at the Alexander Theatre on the University's Clayton campus. Performing Arts Program director Ms Jan Clancy said this year's program would feature some of the biggest names in Australian theatre.

"The revamped Alexander Theatre will host powerful performances by some of Australia's leading actors and contemporary dancers, including shows for young people - all with life-affirming themes of humour and humanity," Ms Clancy said.

Various areas of the university community have been involved in bringing about this year's line-up, she said. "For the third year in a row, the School of Business Systems is sponsoring a performance by Bell Shakespeare. The Monash Master of Business Administration and Dean of Business Administration Centre has also extended its support to a theatrical presentation (Griffin Theatre's Worked Shore), as well as the concert series."

A highlight of the launch was the appearance of well-known actor Mr Anne Phelan (Flamer/Sandling in The Air), who stars in the first play of the season - Mavis Goes to Timer. The play researched and written by Angela Chaplin, Katherine Thompson and Kavisha Mazzella, is based on the true story of Mavis Taylor, a determined great-grandmother of Yarrawonga who decides to do something practical to help the East Timorese.

"She was so affected by the atrocities in East Timor that she filled shipping containers with goods and flew to East Timor with her daughter and granddaughter to teach the Timorese how to resist present conditions and whether they exist present conditions and whether of the world that with delving specific political ideologies. That is not to say their work exists in a political vacuum. Instead it is directly engaged with prevailing stereotypes, symbols, public events and media consumption."

Other productions for the season include the Sydney Theatre Company's The Christian Brothers, Bell Shakespeare's The Tempest, The Royal Command Performance and one matinee scheduled. Productions for the season include the Sydney Theatre Company's The Christian Brothers, Bell Shakespeare's The Tempest, The Royal Command Performance and one matinee scheduled.

Subscriptions to the Performing Arts Program are now available. Contact the Monash Box Office on +61 3 9905 1111 for a 2003 season brochure.

Lecturer takes his first solo show to Brisbane

Monash alumnus and lecturer in fine arts Mr Michael Doolan is exhibiting his work at the Brisbane City Gallery until 23 March.

"Good as Gold, which features sculptural works, is a spin-off of a solo show I did last year," he said. "He said the works in the show were inspired by popular cultural images, most notably children's toys."

"But Good as Gold also brings together ideas beyond the single object. For instance, '3 Bears' forces viewers into the role of Coleyolla the impostor, and their reflection appears in all of the characters," he said.

Art collaboration on show at Caulfield

Prominent Australian-based artists, academics and students Lynelle Brown and Fefel Green will present their first solo museum exhibition at Monash University's Faculty Gallery this month.

"Arcadia is the artists' first solo museum exhibition after more than 14 years of collaborative production. It surveys the last four years of their collaboration with a collection of photographic images that blur the boundaries between fact and fiction, past and present, active engagement and meditative states of being."

"Arcadia will be on display at the gallery at Monash's Caulfield campus until 26 March."

Supporting women through music

Orchestra Victoria gives a performance dominated in support of the Monash Institute of Reproduction and Development's Women's Institute for Science and Education (WISE) program. The event, called "Feeding Babies: One Year After" will be held at 8 pm on 21 March at the Monash University Museum of Art (MUMA), Clayton campus. A dress rehearsal is free.

"The event, called "Feeding Babies: One Year After" will be held at 8 pm on 21 March at the Monash University Museum of Art (MUMA), Clayton campus. A dress rehearsal is free. For more information, contact +61 3 9905 4217 or email enquiries@artdes.monash.edu.au."

"It aims to provide a permanent and substantial framework for young scientists, especially women, who wish to study through the institute."

Good as Gold, who stars in the first play of the season, Mavis Goes to Timer. Photo: Peter Antiljenko

Putting on a show! From left, Cheeky Mime chromatographer Gordon Dzbanan, Mavis Goes to Timer director Angela Chaplin, actor Anne Phelan and vice-chancellor Professor Peter Darvall at the launch of the 2003 Performing Arts Program.

Subscriptions to the Performing Arts Program are now available. Contact the Monash Box Office on +61 3 9905 1111 for a 2003 season brochure.

"Feeding Babies: One Year After" will be held at 8 pm on 21 March at the Monash University Museum of Art (MUMA), Clayton campus. A dress rehearsal is free. For more information, contact +61 3 9905 4217 or email enquiries@artdes.monash.edu.au.

Show Notes

What: Feedback: Art, Social Consciousness and Authenticity
Where: Monash University Museum of Art (MUMA), Clayton campus
When: For more information, contact the gallery on +61 3 9905 4345

Global art view: Shriya Veltes's work, 'Typicons/Typicalis', is part of the Feedback exhibition.

"Feedback attempts to take a broad look at politics as a combination of powerful institutions/systems, media, public events, and conscious and subconscious individual responses that influence one's experience of everyday life," she said. "The artists in Feedback are much concerned with being citizens with two evening performances and one matinee scheduled.

Other productions for the season include the Sydney Theatre Company's The Christian Brothers, Bell Shakespeare's The Tempest, The Royal Command Performance and one matinee scheduled. Productions for the season include the Sydney Theatre Company's The Christian Brothers, Bell Shakespeare's The Tempest, The Royal Command Performance and one matinee scheduled.

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The inspiring story of Mavis Taylor led to a determined great-grandmother of Yarrawonga who decides to do something practical to help the East Timorese.

The inspiring story of Mavis Taylor led to a determined great-grandmother of Yarrawonga who decides to do something practical to help the East Timorese.

Timely Feedback at Monash

Globalisation, politics and the experience of conflict and racism are all placed under the microscope with the thought-provoking and timely exhibition Feedback: Art, Social Consciousness and Authenticity at the Monash University Museum of Art.

The exhibition is being curated by Monash alumnus Mr Charles Day, who graduated with an arts degree and a masters in museums and curatorial culture. He is MUMA's first guest curator for 2003.

Feedback looks at the relationship between micro and macro politics, world events and individual experiences, through the lens of young Australian artists including Louise Bufaruci, Tom Nicholson, Rachel O'Callaghan, and the artist group Damp.

"The exhibition brings together works by young Australians which look at how artists respond to the complex social, political and economic shifts that confront them and society as a whole," Mr Day said. "In doing so, the exhibition attempts to take a broad look at politics as a combination of powerful institutions/systems, media, public events, and conscious and subconscious individual responses that influence one's experience of everyday life," she said. "The artists in Feedback are much concerned with being citizens of the world that with delving specific political ideologies. That is not to say their work exists in a political vacuum. Instead it is directly engaged with prevailing stereotypes, symbols, public events and media consumption."

"I chose the title Feedback because it implies being part of a social process where there is likely to be a difference between the desired or stated and actual result. This gap provides the space for artists to interpret and reflect on existing issues and situations and, in some cases, take action."
Earth’s fire: Lava pours down the slopes of Mt Etna, Italy, in 2001, providing a glimpse of the built-up energy within the earth. Photo: Newspix

Planet Earth: the cause of mass extinctions?

**SCIENCE THEORY**

Mass extinctions and other global catastrophic events could have been caused by a tectonic plate collapsing into the Earth’s mantle, according to a new theory devised by Monash University researchers.

These catastrophic events, when much of life on Earth was extinguished, also coincided with processes that worked deep in the Earth to cause mineral wealth – for example, 440 million years ago when most of the gold in Victoria was formed. These coincidences have led Professor Gordon Lister and Mr Ivo Vos in the School of Geosciences’ Australian Crustal Movements and the Monash Institute to develop the system Earth theory.

The theory proposes that our planet organises itself so that built-up energy is released catastrophically. Earth spends most of its time in equilibrium where its processes are gradual – ice melts, mountains are built and species are lost. But during these periods, tectonic movements lead to an accumulation of mass in mountain belts. These zones can become unstable and create an excess of potential energy.

The system Earth theory dictates that from time to time the energy stored in and around mountain belts is released, primarily as a result of a ‘foundering event’ where the tectonic plates suddenly begin to collapse into the Earth’s mantle. “This process rips mountains apart, tears ribbons of land and causes mass extinctions,” Professor Lister said. At the same time, volcanoes containing enormous accumulations of metal develop.

“Throughout Earth’s history there have been great mass extinctions when most living things are destroyed. We don’t know much about them except that they were abrupt,” Professor Lister said.

“The onset of the plate foundering events seems to coincide with extinction events, and we believe there is a link.”

Professor Lister believes the mass extinction that occurred 440 million years ago was linked to the onset of one of the Earth’s great outpourings of energy.

“Around 440 million years ago, there was an extinction event that wiped out the graptolites, a group of animals that included echinoderms, trilobites and nautiloids. At the same time, a great gold mine was formed in the region around Bendigo and Sassafras,” he said.

“Geological evidence suggests there may have been a foundering event 440 million years ago. This is where the plate began to rapidly roll back as it started to founder and rapidly sink into the mantle, ripping the continent apart. This produced a lot of heat and fluid movement, and flushed gold that was in the mantle towards the surface. “We believe the foundering process changed sea level quite abruptly, producing wide shallow seas. The current theory for the extinction 440 million years ago is glaciation. We think it was the changes to the sea level and other events initiated by the tectonic plates starting to collapse that led to the extinction of the graptolites.”

— Penny Fannin

**Synchrotron twice as bright**

**MAJOR PROJECTS**

Australia’s first synchrotron, to be built at Monash University, is to be twice as powerful as that originally proposed.

The new design, known as Bettiing 20, will generate light twice as bright as the previous design – brightness that is essential for the analysis of complex compounds such as the structure of proteins to cancerous cells.

Monash’s professor of x-ray and synchrotron physics, Rob Lewis, said the increased power of the synchrotron would produce much narrower light beams, giving researchers more options for conducting experiments.

“The design will also be able to accommodate more beamlines, which means many more opportunities will be able to use the machine at the one time,” Professor Lewis said.

Bettiing 20 will now have a larger circumference – 216 metres – to accommodate more than 30 beamlines. The previous design was limited to around 24.

An international team of world-class experts, the International Machine Advisory Committee, has recommended and endorsed the new design.

The Victorian Government has increased its funding for the synchrotron and will provide $157 million for the synchrotron building and machine.

A consortia of universities, research institutions, other governments and the private sector will fund the cost of the beamlines. The total cost of the project will be more than $200 million.

The new design will not impact the synchrotron completion date of early 2007.

— Penny Fannin

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First grants from new institute

**RESEARCH**

An inter-faculty research project looking into the relationship between globalisation, migration and social protection is just one of three projects to receive funding through the recently developed Monash Institute for the Study of Global Movements and the Monash Research Fund.

The project, being led by Professor Chris Nyland from the Department of Management and involving experts from the faculties of Arts, Business and Economics, Education and Law, will consider how globalisation shapes and is shaped by social policies that are intended to provide for migrants.

The research team has been awarded $400,000 over two years and will investigate the interactions, cultural, legal and ethical frameworks that are forced to move and the ability of communities to provide for their own security.

Two other research projects, 'The Effect of Globalisation on Health and Wellbeing, and Sustainable Government of Fisheries, have been awarded $200,000 each over two years.

The projects are the first to receive funding through the Monash Institute for the Study of Global Movements, which was established last year.

The institute brings together the faculties of Arts and Design, Arts, Business and Economics, Education and Law in a bid to address the consequences of global movement, including the movement of people, trade, capital and culture.

The foundation director of the international research project, Professor Nyland, said that as well as carrying out research the institute would facilitate visits of international scholars to the university to lead debates on the issues.

“Many challenges for us to encourage further research on the topic through the faculties and also to spread interest in the topic overseas and through other organisations,” he said.

Professor Nyland has become director of the Monash Institute for the Study of Global Movements in February.

Before taking over the helm of the Institute, Professor Nyland was a fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences, the chief executive of the Committee for Economic Development of Australasia (CEDA).

The Monash Institute for the Study of Global Movements will take the title of Monash Institute for Global Movements on 24 July at the Windsor Hotel in Melbourne.

— Diane Squires

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