Faults hide a golden prize

Australian geologists believe they can explain an unusually regular pattern of gold distribution in Western Australia, a finding they believe could improve predictions of where large gold deposits can be found.

Dr Roberto Weinberg, a senior lecturer in Monash's School of Geosciences, was part of the research team that investigated the regular gold distribution pattern in the 2.7 billion-year-old Boulder-Lefroy fault zone.

Few of Australia's richest known gold deposits, each endowed with more than 100 tonnes of gold, and including the 1800 tonnes giant Golden Mile at Kalgoorlie, were parts of the fault dilated by the intrusion of fluids. Dr Weinberg said: "This is because of the wide variety of factors involved in gold mineralisation."

Large gold deposits exist where vast amounts of fluids carrying dissolved gold within the Earth's crust converge into narrow paths within the fault system.

Dr Weinberg collaborated with Dr Paul Hodkiewicz and Professor David Groves from the University of Western Australia. 

Dr Weinberg said: "The research has shown that the fault's direction should be the focus of exploration, as they are obviously key determinants of gold mineralisation."

Large dilational sites along faults should be the focus of exploration, and they are obvious key determinants of gold mineralisation. Dr Weinberg said: "Within these broad dilational sites, other physical and chemical factors may control the further focusing of fluids and the precipitation of gold out of the fluids, but the dilational sites are a good starting point for exploration." 

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Midsummer in mid-winter

Midsummer Night's Dream is a traditional Shakespeare comedy that combines Shakespeare's most popular comedies - A Midsummer Night's Dream.

Directed by Bell Shakespeare associate artist Anna Vukelic and drawing together a youthful cast of great charm and physicality, this lively and enchanting production will delight its audiences.

On the night of the new moon, all of Athens is abuzz with arrangements for a royal wedding as fairy and mortal worlds collide in the forest, sending magic spells flying. The trials of two pairs of star-crossed lovers entwine with the marital discord of the king and queen of the fairy world.

Mortal worlds collide in the forest, sending magic spells flying. The trials of two pairs of star-crossed lovers entwine with the marital discord of the king and queen of the fairy world.

For more details, see page 6.

MONASH University

NEWS

Predicting a storm front 3

FEATURE

Attack of the ants 7

OPINION

Has our sovereignty been compromised? 5

New approach needed to keep young drivers safe

Accident prevention

Vulnerable young drivers worldwide need more supervision and support. A review of licensing systems worldwide revealed that introducing different driving conditions to new drivers could be the key to reducing their chances of becoming crash statistics. 

Research fellow Dr Teresa Senserrick said the review indicated that newly licensed drivers were one of the groups most vulnerable to crash involvement, particularly in their first year of driving.

"Throughout the world, authorities have become increasingly aware that traditional methods such as standard driver education have not worked," Dr Senserrick said. "An alternative has been to introduce requirements and restrictions on drivers as stages as they learn to drive.

"Crash risks of novice drivers are inflated by the effects of both youth and inexperience. The aim of a graduated driver licensing system is to reduce this risk by limiting driving to safer, lower-risk conditions and progressively lifting restrictions as experience is gained."

Contact: Teresa Senserrick
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Ph: +61 3 9905 1923

Midsummer in mid-winter

The eagerness of lovers and the joy of comedy will combine at Monash this month in an energetic production of one of Shakespeare's most popular comedies - A Midsummer Night's Dream.

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For more details, see page 6.
From the vice-chancellor’s desk

A monthly column by the vice-chancellor of the University of Monash, Professor Richard Larkins

This year’s election has significant implications for Australia’s higher education sector. Universities are in the process of responding to the Higher Education Support Act 2003. At Monash, the University Council decided to increase the student contribution amount (HECS fee) for most of its courses by 25 per cent, making the average student contribution to the cost of their university education about 40 per cent. Depending on the course, the HECS debt would vary from around $14,000 to $40,000.

Offering this increase in student contributions, the salary graduates can earn before repaying the interest-free government loan has increased from $24,900 to $35,000.

In addition, there has been an increase in the number of full-fee-paying Australian undergraduate places that can be admitted over and above the quota of HECS places from 25 per cent to 35 per cent of the total load. These two changes will provide a real increase in income per Australian student at the university and an increase in the university income of between $30 and $40 million annually by 2007.

Eighty per cent of this increased income will be used to improve educational and support services for students, and 20 per cent will be used to expand current equity and scholarships programs for socially and economically disadvantaged students.

The policy proposed by the Labor Party would reverse the increase in HECS charges and phase out the full-fee-paying undergraduate places for Australian students. Full independence of the Commonwealth Grants to universities would be introduced and 20,000 new places would be funded. However, there would be no increase in funds available per student, and the overall effect would be a substantial decrease in the income to universities such as Monash. This would inevitably prevent the planned improvements in educational support services and the expansion of equity programs.

Along with many of my fellow vice-chancellors, I strongly support the principle of public investment in higher education and in not imposing further demands on students. Our universities desperately require increased funding if our educational system is to be internationally competitive. As the election campaign unfolds, it is hoped that both parties recognize the public good that comes from increased public investment in higher education and that the current policies are substantially modified.

Benjamin Disraeli, 130 years ago, wrote in the House of Commons: “Up to the educators of the people and the leaders of this country depends”. His words are as true in Australia today as they were in Great Britain all those years ago.

- Richard Larkins

Asian boom needs social safety net

Globalisation

Globalisation has been a mixed blessing for Asian economies because gains for business have been mixed gains for the region’s poorer citizens, a Monash workshop has heard.

Opportunities presented by the rapid growth of the global economy have left sharp reminders of the need for adequate social protection systems for workers and urban migrants and children, Professor Chris Nyland, of the International Business Research Unit, told participants in the workshop on social protest in South Asia, China and Malaysia.

He said economic crises caused by globalisation in the region were felt most keenly by the nations that had failed to establish effective social security networks.

Professor Nyland, professor of international business in the Department of Management, said a healthy social protection system might be a future requirement for effective fire market structures in Asia.

Malaysian librarians train at Monash

Staff at the Monash University Library recently conducted a specialist training program for a group of Malaysian librarians focusing on the delivery of library services in the Asia-Pacific region.

The three-week program covered library operations and policy and the participants received an insight into how the library manager and staff used digital and physical resources. Participants also gained hands-on experience by spending time in key library sections such as reference and loans.

The library’s corporate services and international development director, Mrs Chooi Hin Ho, who coordinated the program, said tailored training programs conducted by library staff were attracting increasing interest from library professionals outside Monash.

“We have conducted training programs for librarians from our Malaysia campus for several years and globalisation of our internal programs has led to many requests from library organisations in Malaysia to open our training program to 100 Monash participants,” she said.

The group of 12 participants included librarians from tertiary institutions across Malaysia and the National Library of Malaysia, Umpqua, as well as 12 librarians from Monash University Malaysia. All are members of the Librarians’ Association of Malaysia (Perpustakaan Panasikan Malaysia), which was instrumental in arranging the program.

University Librarian Ms Catherine Habor-Ree said the program was an opportunity to showcase Monash’s library as a leader in the provision of digital services.

“Monash University has a well deserved and respected name in Malaysia,” she said. “This program provided an opportunity to strengthen our ties with the Malaysian community and we are hopeful the training program will be offered again in the future.”

- Karen Stichlenth

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News

Briefly

NHMRC grants

Monash researchers have been awarded $488,125 in development grants by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) for projects exploring new ways to treat, prevent and develop medical diagnostic devices and the development of drugs to treat metastatic cancer.

Of the 14 grants announced nationally there were two awarded to researchers associated with Monash.

Dr Martin Lackmann, a senior research fellow in the Division of Cancer and Molecular Biology, who received $204,125, to refine and improve the effectiveness of two proteins to selectively target and internally kill, tumour cells from a number of cancers, including melanomas.

Dr Lisa Martin, a senior lecturer in the School of Chemistry, who will use her $284,500 grant to develop a new medical diagnostic device that could help detect a range of medical conditions.

Dr Hans Nemer and Dr Ted MacFarlane from the Department of Microbiology, who received a $150,500 grant to further their development of a vaccine against human immunodeficiency virus (HIV-1).

Herb Feith foundation

A foundation has been established in the name of Australia’s former scholars of Indonesia and former Monash University political professor, Herb Feith, who died late last year.

Herb Feith example and ideals inspired the founding of the Volunteer Graduate Scheme that developed into an important element of the Monash University-Herbert Feith Foundation. The Monash University Herb Feith Foundation has been set up to promote a range of educational activities. These include establishing the Herb Feith Chair for the study of Indonesia to be held at Monash through research and teaching on Indonesia.

Graduate wins Fulbright

A medical graduate from Monash University has been awarded the Australian Fulbright (Alumni) Association's prestigious W.G. Walker Memorial Award.

Dr Ranjana Srivastava, who graduated with a law degree from India in 1997, received the award in April. Presented to the top-ranked postgraduate Fulbright recipient in Australia, it is named in honour of Professor Bill Walker, the inaugural president of the Australian Fulbright Association.

The $50,000 award will support a 12-month fellowship for Dr Srivastava, beginning this month, at the Macau Law Centre for Clinical Medical Ethics at the University of Chicago. The postgraduate fellowship is designed to promote a cross-cultural understanding in communication and ethics in medicine.

Since completing her postgrad, Dr Srivastava has been engaged in research in and teaching on violence and human rights in Australia.

Research ties with Europe

Monash has continued to take a leading role in developing research ties between Australia and Europe via a series of agreements to provide fellowships for Australian scholars to carry out research at the European University Institute (EUI).

Under an agreement first signed in 1999, between the Australian European University Liaison Fellowship Associations Incorporated (AEUIFAI) and the EUI, doctoral and postdoctoral fellowships have been awarded to Australian researchers for periods of three years at the EUI.

The AEUIFAI is an independent body made up of representatives from a number of Australian universities and the European Union Delegation in Canberra.

Monash has taken a major role in the association in terms of funding and leadership, and is currently represented by former Professor Howard, as a senior lecturer in the School of European Studies.

In early June, the AEUIFAI and the EUI signed a renewal of their agreement of cooperation, a $30,000 grant to establish three fellowships, $10,000 each, for Australian scholars to carry out research at the EUI.

- Alan Jones

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From left: Dr Wendy Smith, Dr Sity Daud and Professor Chris Nyland.

Monash News, July 2004

Herb Feith's example and ideals inspired the founding of the Volunteer Graduate Scheme that developed into an important element of the Monash University-Herbert Feith Foundation.
Sleeping giants awake

Animal conservation

Zoos are the 'sleeping giants' of conservation, with the power to transform visitors into ambassadors for wildlife preservation, Monash researcher Dr Sue Broad has found.

Dr Broad, a researcher in the Monash Tourism Research Centre and Monash University's School of Geography and Environmental Science, has found that public awareness of the importance of wildlife preservation, Monash researcher Dr Sue Broad has found.

Dr Broad said a research partnership between Zoos Victoria and Monash University was established in 2003 to critically examine the relationship between the interpretive experience and the achievement of conservation outcomes at Zoos Victoria's three properties - Melbourne Zoo, Healesville Sanctuary and Werribee's Open Range Zoo.

"Zoos are described as the sleeping giants of the conservation field because of the number and range of visitors, the extent of repeat visits and the potential to influence public beliefs, knowledge, attitudes and behaviors towards conservation," Dr Broad said.

She believes zoos can capitalise on the public demand for opportunities to interact with wildlife.

 она:

"Of all the reasons for visiting a zoo, recreation is the least valued as a justification for keeping animals in captivity, but education is a major priority today," she said.

For example, the seal enclosure at Melbourne Zoo includes one special pool that was rehabilitated by zoo staff after being injured by plastic rubbish. He acts as an unofficial ambassador for the environmental cause, captivity, but education is a major priority today; she said.

"Visitors spend at each zoo visit, but education is a major priority today; she said."

Usually, the spectacular natural phenomena has its origin in sea breeze circulation that occur over Cape York Peninsula. When the breeze crosses from east to west in the Gulf and continues into north Australia including the Top End, and because thunderstorms are intrinsically difficult to predict when the storms will form, the severity of the storm, what time it will occur and how much rain it will produce.

If we can accurately forecast storms in the Cape York region, that's the first step to forecasting storms more generally across the tropics and in southern Australia." - Penny Fannin

Overcoming hurdles in diagnosing depression

Mental health

Monash University researchers are developing tools to help general practitioners and support workers recognise depression in people with an intellectual disability.

Dr Teresa Iacono, research director of the Centre for Developmental Disability Health Victoria, said identifying depression in disabled people who had intellectual problems was notoriously difficult.

"Problems in accessing assessment and intervention services made from the fact that GPs are rarely knowledgeable about intellectual disabilities, and that access to specialist psychiatrists is limited in Australia," Dr Iacono said.

The centre's $50,000 funding to develop the screening tool - a checklist for use by service workers and an assessment tool for GPs - has come from the Brotherhood of St Laurence's Victorian Centre of Excellence in Depression and Related Disorders.

Dr Iacono said the criteria in the checklists, developed by the project's chief investigator and consultant psychiatrist, Dr Jennifer Tout, were based on "intact" signs and symptoms of depression including mood, sleep, appetite, energy and concentration.

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Science sets its goals

Dean of Science Professor Rob Norris said although the results were pleasing, he had assigned faculty staff a goal of improving their performance even further through the introduction of additional review and quality improvement processes. "The transition from secondary school to university involves changes in expectations and the development of new learning and social skills," Professor Norris said. "The outcomes of the MEQ highlight the importance of good communication and the need to establish clear expectations."

He said that while other universities had pursued niche degrees, the Science faculty had developed the generic Bachelor of Science as its flagship program. "The course offers flexibility for students to explore a range of science disciplines and then, through their chosen major sequence, develop a depth of knowledge and skills in their area of specialisation.

"At the same time, through specialist core units, science students develop essential generic skills that provide the basis for self-managed learning that employers seek. In a rapidly changing world, technical knowledge fast becomes obsolete, but well-developed analytical and numerical skills, effective communication and critical thinking stand the test of time."

These were all areas of the MEQ where science respondents reported high levels of satisfaction.

"The students who responded to this first survey have provided a wealth of information to consider," Professor Norris said. "Their views and insights will contribute to the future of science at Monash, and they have set a baseline that the faculty will seek to improve upon in future surveys."

"The faculty is pleased that science students across all of the campuses are satisfied with their study experience, but it also seeks to establish new standards in teaching, learning and course administration that others can only seek to emulate." - Penny Fannin

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Heavenly transit

Astronomers at Monash's Clayton campus recorded the transit of Venus with students who watched images, captured by an automated telescope on the roof of a campus building, relayed to the big screen of a theatre in a nearby building.

A small group also manned a telescope on the roof of the university's Morice building from mid-afternoon until sunset. Ms Susan Feteris, a lecturer and astronomy public engagement officer, said the wait had been well worth it.

"Nothing terribly exciting happened until 3.03 pm, when we saw the dark disk of Venus clear the edge of the Sun," she said.

"The images we captured were very clear and with good keystone. It was wonderful to share the event with so many people." For more Monash images of the transit of Venus, visit www.spmc.monash.edu.au/venus.

Planetary path: Venus blocks the face of the Sun.

Mastering the art of being a school principal

School leadership

A new course to train aspiring school principals begins at Monash today, the culmination of a 12-month project, following the Education Faculty's bid to win a Victorian Government tender to deliver a Master in School Leadership degree.

The master's degree tender was awarded along with another tender from the Department of Education and Training to provide a mentoring program for junior principals. Project director for both tenders, Dr Brenda Beatty said scholarship-supported places for the master's degree would be offered by Monash to 2004 state school principals who were in the top 40 percent of their subject area, and had been in school leadership positions for three years at Texas State University-San Marcos, where she was an assistant professor in the Educational Administration department.

"We also believe that education plays an important role in developing more sustainable communities. Because we are committed to economic, social and environmental responsibility as a way of doing business, we have developed a sustainable development action plan to help you save money and the environment - the me&u GoGreenCarLoans program," said Dean of Science Professor Rob Norris.

"This is a new initiative for Australians, and the course is designed to help aspiring principals build confidence, make connections and emotional preparedness to face the rapidly changing world, technical knowledge fast becomes obsolete, but well-developed analytical and numerical skills, effective communication and critical thinking stand the test of time."

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Australia's political sovereignty compromised?

The Australia-US alliance has come under increasing scrutiny in recent months following forays into Australian domestic politics by Washington's ambassador in Canberra, Tom Schieffer, and by President Bush himself, writes Dr David Wright-Neville, a senior lecturer in Monash University's School of Political and Social Inquiry and a former senior intelligence analyst with the Australian Government.

Alexander Downer's recent claim that the pre-selection of Peter Garrett for the safe Labor seat of Kingsford-Smith would jeopardise the Australia-US alliance was a transparently opportunistic move. But the political one-upmanship disguises a more sinister development; namely, the extent to which the government appears willing to compromise the concrete reality of Australia's political sovereignty for the sake of a less certain promise of strategic well-being and political self-interest.

Witness just a handful of instances culled from the past six months. First there were the panicked howls of outrage inspired by Mark Latham's commitment to bring Australia's troops in Iraq home by Christmas. Rather than attack the integrity of Latham's suggestion on its merits, the government's initial response was to charge that the US alliance was at risk.

Second, there have been the astonishing breaches of diplomatic protocol represented by the forays into Australian domestic politics by both Washington's ambassador in Canberra, Tom Schieffer, and by President Bush himself. One can imagine the Prime Minister's indignation had the Indonesian ambassador attended a fundraiser for Kevin Rudd, as Schieffer did for Downer, or if former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir ventured into Australian domestic politics on behalf of Latham in the same way that Bush poked his nose into the ALP.

It is a key tenet of international diplomatic protocol that legates of foreign governments, as well as their embassies and high commissions, desist from overt interference in the domestic politics of foreign states. Indeed, in the past this practice has been held to be so important that flouting it drew the serious charge of a breach of a state's political sovereignty.

Finally, we had the spectacle last month of Alexander Downer again warning the Australian public about the deleterious consequences for the alliance that could flow from Garrett's foray into federal politics as a member of the ALP. But the Howard Government's attempt, with apparent US acquiescence, to turn the US alliance into its own domain is a shameful misuse of fundamental questions about the way in which our relationship with Washington has evolved over the eight years since Howard was elected. It is indeed true that Washington would downgrade the alliance as retaliation for Australians making sovereign political decisions, that Australians are justified in questioning the type of relationship that our foreign policy elite has carved out for us. Indeed, it would be a devastating indictment of Australian foreign policy.

Canada is a US ally and has not been targeted by Washington for its reluctance to involve itself in the war in Iraq. Nor have other prominent US allies, including Japan, South Korea and most NATO members, whose involvement in Iraq is a relatively recent development. And yet if Howard, Downer, Bush and Schieffer are to be believed, Australia, despite its unqualified support for Washington's Iraqi misadventure thus far, faces punishment for making sovereign political choices.

It is true that Australia draws enormous benefits from its relationship with the United States, especially in terms of access to intelligence and military technology. But it is far from clear-cut that these benefits justify a policy of subservience. Washington's reluctance to involve itself more fully in East Timor (out of deference to its own relationship with Jakarta), the meagre offerings in the proposed Australia-US free trade agreement, and a recent announcement that Australia will not be allowed to share fully in the high-end technology being developed for the next generation of US-designed strike fighter aircraft, despite Australian investment in the development stage, are only the most recent examples of where supposed benefits from the Alliance have failed to materialise.

Take no mistake, the US alliance is important for Australia, and for the foreseeable future it must provide the fulcrum upon which our security rests. Australia's troop commitment to the US-led military operation in Iraq is less than 0.05 per cent of the total allied presence in that country. It has been a small but valuable commitment that has again proven this country's preparedness to back its great and powerful friend. As a result of this commitment, Australians at home and abroad face an elevated risk of terrorist attack. As the very least it is reasonable that Australia's contribution be gratefully acknowledged - which it is - without the threat of recrimination dangling over us - which it is not.

As a community, the current debate over the merits of an ongoing military commitment to Iraq is a sign of a healthy democracy. But threats of a punitive US response undermine the essence of our democracy.

Moreover, the Howard Government's complacency in Washington's bullying behaviour is at odds with its core responsibility to defend the independence of all Australians.

Photo: Fairfaxphotos

"There have been the astonishing breaches of diplomatic protocol represented by the forays into Australian domestic politics by both Washington's ambassador in Canberra, Tom Schieffer, and by President Bush himself."

Photo: Fairfaxphotos
Rebels with a Cause
Independents in Australian Politics
By Brian Costar and Jennifer Curtin
Published by University of New South Wales Press
RRP: $10.95

This comprehensive account of the phenomenon of non-party parliamentarians, the authors draw on new research from regional Australia and look at why independents are gaining support, how they relate to the major parties, and how they exercise power in state and federal parliament.

Regional Security in the Asia Pacific
9/11 and After
Edited by Marika Vezic, Mark David Wright-Neville and Pete Lentini
Published by Edward Elgar Publishing
RRP: $78.95

In this book, Asia specialists from academia and policy think-tanks assess the impact of the September 11 attacks on the Asia Pacific. The contributors consider regional and global security in ways beyond the narrow focus on nations-states.

The Lung
Stages of change throughout its life cycle, starting before birth and continuing through to old age and death.

Henry Handel Richardson
A Life
By Michael Ackland
Published by Cambridge University Press
RRP: $59.95

Henry Handel Richardson is celebrated for her novels The Getting of Wisdom and The Fortunes of Richard Mahoney, yet little is known of the life-writing that engendered literary love.

The Bell Shakespeare Company's new production of A Midsummer Night's Dream, one of William Shakespeare's funniest and most popular comedies, is being presented by the Monash University Arts Centre this month.

Summer love is like no other
Sweet dreams on a midsummer's night: Simon Bussell and Georgia Adamson as the lovers Lysander and Hermia.

Show notes:
Where: Until 12 September.
Who: For more information, email Troy.Innocent@degs.monash.edu.au.

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Who: For more information, email Troy.Innocent@degs.monash.edu.au.

Monash News, July 2004
In 2001, an innocuous-looking ant was discovered at Palmtons Island, off the coast of Queensland, where it was thought to be a native species. It was later identified as the Argentine ant, which is known for its aggressive behavior and ability to spread rapidly. The Argentine ant is one of the worst invasive ants and poses severe threats to Australia’s environmental, economic and social well-being. With funding from the Australian Government’s Natural Heritage Trust, Monash University’s Dr Dennis O’Dowd is developing an Australian threat abatement plan for some of the world’s worst invasive ants.

But despite the challenges, Dr O’Dowd is confident that something can be done to mitigate the social, environmental and economic threats posed by these ants. Already, Queensland’s intensive eradication campaigns for the imported fire ant has made significant progress. More than 400 people have been applying chemical-laced bait to affected areas. These baits have been distributed by hand, with machine-driven spreaders and aerially. In some areas, the infestation has been reduced by 99 per cent.

In 2002, an aerial baiting campaign of 2500 bait stations across Christmas Island reduced the ant’s activity by 99 per cent. The ants had decimated Christmas Island’s world-renowned red crab population and severely damaged the island’s ecology.

“Data collected from 50 monitoring stations across the island indicated that the baiting achieved very moderate control of all known crazy ant supercolonies. But we don’t know yet whether this will effectively control crazy ants in the long term,” Dr O’Dowd says.

“For a lot of these invasions, it might be more economic and effective to act stragghly, in the absence of full scientific knowledge,” he says. “While we might prefer to gather all knowledge on the possible impacts of these ants and their control before acting, by then it may be too late.”

- Penny Fannin

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**Red imported fire ant**
First arrived: 1950
Introduction: unintentional
How: unknown
Distributed: Brisbane, Queensland
Native to: South America

**Yellow crazy ant**
First arrived: pre-1934
Introduction: unintentional
How: unknown
Distributed: Brisbane, Cairns, Northern Territory, Christmas Island
Native to: unknown - possibly Africa, India or China

**Tropical fire ant**
First arrived: unknown
Introduction: unintentional
How: unknown
Distributed: Queensland, Northern Territory
Native to: Central America through to the southern United States
Call for independent body to fight police corruption

Criminology

A new independent body to tackle police corruption and organised crime in Victoria should be established, participants in a recent Monash-led seminar have concluded.

The participants – Law faculty dean Professor Arie Freiberg, Monash criminal justice and criminology head Associate Professor Colleen Lewis, Law Institute of Victoria (LIV) president Mr. Chris Dale, Victorian Criminal Bar Association chairman Mr. Lex Lasry QC and shadow attorney-general Mr. Andrew McIntosh – said that recent government proposals to fight the problems had been developed on the run.

They needed to establish a working party of representatives from the legal community and academia, as well as professionals within the criminal justice system and members of the wider community, to develop a model of a crime and corruption-fighting body. The model will be presented to the Victorian Government as soon as possible.

Professor Freiberg critiqued recent changes to the criminal justice system that had been implemented without any consultation.

Significant developments include the announcement that the Federal Government will create a new body to investigate corruption in Commonwealth organisations. It is significant that this function, these powers were not given to the Commonwealth ombudsman, even though his office had the power to investigate complaints against the federal police, he said.

"It is also significant that the Federal Government has refused to give the state ombudsman phone-tapping powers because he is, in effect, not a law enforcement body in the same way that agencies in other states are who have been given these powers," he said. The level of debate in Victoria regarding whether to establish a crime commission was not acceptable. "The debate has been carried out on radio and TV and in the newspapers, but not in any formal forums where the issues can be explored in some detail."

"Our seminar brought together some of the leading participants in the debate. It is an attempt to take a measured approach to very important institutional issues that will affect the structure of our criminal justice for some time to come." – Robyn Anna

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The latest edition of Hazards, published by MUARC's Victorian Injury Surveillance and Applied Research Unit, reveals that 15 elderly people died and more than 600 were treated for burns and scalds in Victorian hospitals between 2001 and 2003.

More than 1700 young children were treated during the same period.

"Burns and scalds are among the most costly of non-fatal injuries in terms of ongoing medical care and rehabilitation and psychological costs," Ms Casella said.

"We need to combine education, awareness and enforcement initiatives to create a safer environment for vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly." – Allison Harding

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Electricity privatisation fears unfounded

Privatisation

Despite dire predictions of lower service quality and higher prices, the restructuring of Victoria's electricity supply industry has largely benefited consumers, Professor Graeme Hodge, director of the Law faculty's Centre for the Study of Privatisation and Public Accountability, has said.

Following an official launch of the book Power for All: Australia's Electricity Reform Experiment, Professor Hodge said radical privatisation and regulatory reform in Victoria had improved the quality of power supplies, despite concerns to the contrary.

The book, which reviewed the past decade of reform to the Australian electricity supply industry, was edited by Professor Hodge and a team from Monash and Swiss Business universities, including fellow Monash Law faculty academic Ms Valerie Saldiva.

"I suspect we are now better off having restructured," he said. "But we ought to remember that both privatisation and competition reforms have been highly controversial policy areas that have attracted advocates and critics whose enthusiasm borders on the religious."

Professor Hodge said he had no doubt the 1998 establishment of a National Electricity Market (NEM) had been the right thing to do in terms of the effectiveness of electricity industry reforms.

The NEM aims to promote competition at each stage of the electricity production and supply chain, and provides electricity to about 7.7 million customers in Queensland, New South Wales, the ACT, Victoria and South Australia.

"I believe the NEM was right," he said. "I believe it is working, but there are still challenges." In cities that were not part of the NEM, price changes had been disparate, with Peron, requiring a 45 per cent decrease in electricity charges and Hobsons experiencing a 165 per cent increase.

"Elderly burns patients are more likely to suffer serious injuries or die, though the combination of frailty and late admissions could partly explain this trend."

More than 70 per cent of burns and scalds to young children occurred in the home; 90 per cent of burns to children were caused by hot drinks or other hot fluids (usually heated water, not tap water), the report found.

Scalds among the elderly were mainly from hot fluids (usually boiling water), but drinks and running hot water, such as during a shower. Eight of the 15 deaths were caused by smoke, fire or flames, while the other seven were from scalds from hot fluids.

The report recommended burn and scald prevention education and media campaigns, including appropriate first aid.

"Burns and scalds are among the most costly of non-fatal injuries in terms of ongoing medical care and rehabilitation and psychological costs," Ms Casella said.

"We need to combine education, awareness and enforcement initiatives to create a safer environment for vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly."

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