

CONNECTIONS

ISSUE 16 SUMMER 2011

 **VICTORIA
UNIVERSITY**
MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA

REGINA BELSKI

EATING TO LIVE BETTER

Putting the blowtorch on
junk food

TAKING THE LEAD IN CHINA

VU in a select category

FOR THE LOVE OF WORDS

Bruno Lettieri shares his passion

TRADING SPACES

Our \$8.3m dynamic learning experience
revealed



Eating to live better

5
Dietician Dr Regina Belski is a new face in the School of Biomedical and Health Sciences, and she is passionate about enabling people to live healthier lives through better food choices.

To the last drop

13
VU is recognised nationally and internationally for its water recycling research. Current research ranges from stormwater capture and wetland management to drought prediction and the psychology behind sustainability.

Training with

Lazarus

22
VU has joined with the University of Melbourne and Western Health to open a major health research centre at Sunshine Hospital.

Passion at a price

28
The introduced backyard Mallard duck may be 'loving' Australia's native Pacific Black Duck into extinction.

Students go green

36
VU is taking a lead role in sustainability in the education sector by incorporating sustainability units and practices into many of its trade courses and degrees.

In the fast lane

41
VU student and running sensation Liam Adams took out Sydney's 2011 City2Surf footrace against 80,000 competitors. He is now training for selection for the London Olympics.



Masterful deeds

46
MBA graduate Karthikeyan Vaitheeswaran has won a prestigious national award in recognition of his community service helping survivors of the 2004 Tsunami in India.

Girls' rules

50
The VU Women's Aussie Rules football team has been demolishing sides across the country that dare to meet them out on the field. The women have duly been named VU's Sporting Team of the Year.

Taking the lead in China

55
VU is at the forefront of course delivery by Australian providers in China, offering courses at seven universities and colleges with enrolments of almost 4000 students. Research collaborations are also blossoming.

For the love of words

60
For almost 20 years, writing teacher Bruno Lettieri has been sharing his passion for language and a genuine love of writing and writers.

Honouring excellence

66
VU received more than 60 nominations for the four categories represented at its inaugural Alumni Awards held in October.

Trade boom

72
Melbourne's west is the fastest growing region in Australia and experiencing a huge demand for trade skills to meet the needs of the booming population. VU is boosting its trade programs to meet the demand.



Contents

Training made to measure

An increasing proportion of VU training is delivered for organisations that want the skills of their staff improved through customised programs. Last year, VU delivered almost two million hours of workplace learning.

82

Trading spaces

Footscray Nicholson Campus is home to VU's fifth Learning Commons. At a cost of \$8.3 million, it is providing students with an informal, dynamic environment to maximise their learning experience on campus.

86

All in the family

Most of Mu Sey Nay's extended family have enrolled in English classes at VU after spending decades in a refugee camp on the Thai-Burma border.

93



A first in childcare

Last year, Chloe Ryan graduated as the first Indigenous trainee to obtain a VU Certificate III in Children's Services. Now studying the Diploma, she plans to pathway into a Bachelor of Education.

97

A diploma by degree

VU's new diploma-into-degree courses are offering students pathways into the second year of a Bachelor program after completing first year in a supportive TAFE setting.

101

In brief

News snippets from around the University.

104

New books

A selection of new book releases by authors in the VU community.

107

Talking point

In the first of a new column by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Peter Dawkins reflects on several key speeches made at the recent onshore graduations and their common theme of the power of education to transform lives.

109

VU facts

110



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Cover photo

Dietician Dr Regina Belski from VU's School of Biomedical and Health Sciences, turns up the heat on food with poor nutrition.

The paper in this publication consists of 50 per cent post-consumer recycled waste paper and 50 per cent FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) certified fibre. It is also elemental chlorine free.

From the Editor

Welcome to the summer 2011 edition of *Connections* magazine.

This edition is packed with stories about our staff, students, alumni and our burgeoning research activity. As a magazine that caters to a broad readership, *Connections* has something for everyone.

Our cover feature in this issue is on dietician Dr Regina Belski, a researcher and academic in the School of Biomedical and Health Sciences. Dr Belski's interests in the value of good nutrition are broad to say the least: she has helped endurance athletes prepare for epic challenges; malnourished children grow into healthy teenagers; fire-fighters prepare for battling fires during our scorching summers; and even helped couples conceive for the first time.

There is also a feature on the University's very first Alumni Awards, which honoured six of the University's more than 80,000 alumni – who work and live in more than 140 countries – for their outstanding success or service to the community following their graduation. The Distinguished Alumnus of the Year, State Treasure Kim Wells, in fact holds multiple degrees from Victoria University.

This issue includes a new column, Talking Point, written by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Peter Dawkins. Professor Dawkins reflects on the power of education, not only to transform lives but to change the world. His prompt was his participation in the recent Victoria University graduation ceremonies both at home and abroad.

Finally, I'd like to share with our readership a recent honour awarded by the Australian TAFE Marketing Association. *Connections* was judged the best Newsletter/Magazine produced by Australia's TAFEs, Registered Training Organisations and dual-sector universities for its ability to meet the communications needs of internal and external audiences with its balanced approach to news and events across the TAFE and higher education landscape.

The judges felt *Connections* was successful in generating awareness of the University as a quality education and training provider with an emerging research profile, and as an innovative, dynamic and forward-looking University that is making a major impact with its training, research and community support programs.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue.

Phil Kofoed
Managing Editor



DR. BELSKI

**Eating to
live better**



BY MICHAEL QUIN

Dietician Dr Regina Belski is a bright new face in health science research at Victoria University. She is helping people change their lives through a better understanding of the food they eat.

Dr Regina Belski is well-versed in the science of nutrition but when she sees patients with a poor diet she drops the jargon and talks cars instead.

“Your body is this perfectly designed and engineered piece of machinery – like a formula one racing car,” she tells them. “If you just fill it with poor quality fuel, or not enough fuel, you’ll only make it around the first lap then slowly plod along.”

She advises them that if they want to fly along they should consider using high-performance fuel, and as far as the body is concerned that’s optimal nutrition.

The 26-year-old dietitian and academic in Victoria University’s School of Biomedical and Health Sciences has a playful way of explaining serious science through analogies, which she confesses to overusing at times. But underlying this is a genuine desire to communicate the difference optimal nutrition can make to health and performance.

“As scientists in a field that affects every person’s life we are responsible for reaching out and making that science clearly understandable,” she says. “We need to communicate its relevance to every person.”



Slowly, more people will begin to understand that nature has given us almost everything we need.

Belski's motivation for taking on that responsibility is that she has seen it change lives.

During her PhD studies she helped a group lose over half a tonne of fat between them, which – she proudly points out – is equivalent to a small hippopotamus.

But dietetics is more than weight loss. The young doctor has helped endurance athletes prepare for 90 kilometre ultra-marathons through the desert, helped couples conceive for the first time thanks to nutritional changes, and helped malnourished kids develop into healthy teenagers.

“Seeing the effects it has on people, seeing it change their lives, is the most rewarding part of the job,” she says. And it's the sheer variety of the job that keeps her interested: from clinical settings with tube feeds in hospitals, to improving the performance of elite athletes or emergency services personnel, to working with culturally diverse groups in the community, or even the homeless.

And as with many enthusiastic young achievers, Belski ends up taking on huge amounts of work.

She holds down a full-time teaching role at Victoria University's St Albans Campus, co-ordinates a number of units in the University's new Master of Dietetics course, actively researches in her field, and works three hours a week as a dietitian in a city clinic.

“They say there's meant to be something called sleep and work-life balance, but at the moment it is all systems go,” she says.

But her efforts have not gone unnoticed. Earlier this year Belski took out one of 16 national Fresh Science awards, given annually to promising early career researchers, for her study showing the health benefits of lupin for the heart.

Her 12-month study of 130 overweight but otherwise healthy people, found those who ate bread, pasta and biscuits in which normal wheat flour was

partially replaced with lupin flour had a lower risk of developing heart problems.

“What the study showed was that by making a simple change in food choice we can see direct health benefits like a decreased risk of heart disease,” Belski says.

With 85 per cent of the world’s lupin supply – mostly used as stock feed – grown in Australia, the potential for growth in lupin flour products is huge.

The award-winning research brought her speaking engagements, media attention and even the chance to address parliamentarians in Canberra, where she took the opportunity to rally for more research funding to tackle national health issues like obesity and diabetes.

But then it was back to work.

Belski has just completed a six-month research project with VU colleagues and the Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment, looking at the nutrition and hydration of bushfire fighters.

Belski says the fatigue and dehydration after long days on the fire line in heavy clothing is more severe than one might assume, with nutritional requirements being as high as, if not higher than, endurance athletes.

“Fire fighters might need to consume six to ten litres of water in a shift to keep hydrated, which is higher than what a triathlete needs when competing in a triathlon,” she says. “But then the fire fighter will often go back and do the same job the next day and the day after that. It’s like doing back-to-back endurance events.”

Her team’s research-based recommendations will now help the state’s fire fighters better prepare for this summer’s fire season.

Looking ahead, Belski wants to focus her research on helping people in their daily battle to eat the right foods.

She recently began looking at the possibilities of nutrigenomics – matching dietary needs to individual genetics – to better understand why some people struggle more than others with the food they eat and why some go on to develop diet-related diseases while others with similar food habits do not.

“Personalised nutrition could allow us to meet individual needs based on genes and predispositions,” she says. “It allows us to aim for optimal health rather than just the absence of disease.”

While true personalised nutrition is still a few years away, Belski says she’s keen to add to the body of current knowledge and make it a reality as soon as possible.

But for the time being the challenge remains setting healthy eating habits, person by person, and Belski is busy raising an army for the task.

“What I find so exciting about working in the teaching/research nexus is helping train the next generation of dietitians so there will be a whole army of us passionate about making a positive change in people’s lives,” she says.

While her enthusiasm can be contagious, she knows rapid and complete change in eating habits is unrealistic and bound to fail.

She says dietitians always have to remember they are working in the real world, where there is temptation from that packet of crisps or Tim Tams staring at you from across the room. She says the best approach is to help people develop positive habits and make the healthy choice the easy choice.

One tip she tells addicts of olive oil is to always pour it into a spoon before adding it to cooking. “That way even if they choose to use 20 spoonfuls at least they are conscious of how much they are using and can easily keep track of it,” she says. “Not like the drizzle of olive oil on some cooking shows that end up being half the bottle.”



Nutrigenomics will allow us to aim for optimal health rather than just the absence of disease.

Another simple saying she tells patients is, 'if it doesn't go into your shopping trolley, it doesn't go into your pantry, and it doesn't go into your mouth', to remind them that healthy eating starts with conscious shopping.

While many Australians could be described as overweight or obese, Belski does see hope in the new interest in fresh food and home cooking, and says it makes the role of dietitians crucial here and now.

"If people are seeking new things and actively trying to improve their nutrition and the quality of the food they eat, then we need to be there exposing them to the correct information – to reinforce what's valuable and dispel what is questionable," she says.

"Slowly, more people will begin to understand that nature has given us almost everything we need. But we just need to learn to use it better, and I'm here to teach people how."

And one gets the sense that, like a formula one racing car on high-performance fuel, Belski will be hard to stop. ●

RESEARCH IN THE SCHOOL OF BIOMEDICAL AND HEALTH SCIENCES



Research is mostly conducted within two newly created faculty research units: Biomedical and Lifestyle Diseases (BioLED); and Advanced Food Systems. The research has broad practical applications that benefit the community.

Research within BioLED brings together nutrition, biomedical and physiological sciences, and osteopathy in a multifaceted approach to public health needs. The 'big picture' aim is to improve people's ability to age well and age productively. Current BioLED research includes:

- How manipulating the intensity and duration of high-intensity, intermittent exercise can maximise weight loss.
- How whey protein and other nutritional supplements can enhance the effects of resistance training, improve recovery from muscle injury and slow the muscle wasting that occurs with age.
- Whether defective metabolism plays a far more important role in causing muscular dystrophy than previously thought.
- How to regulate skeletal muscle glucose uptake and insulin sensitivity.
- Whether dietary manipulation supplements can stop obesity-associated diseases.
- The effects of bowel cancer and chemotherapy on the intestinal nervous system.
- Post-cancer tissue regeneration and possible anti-cancer agents.

Research within Advanced Food Systems

focuses on scientific and technological advances to meet the challenges of sustainability and feeding growing populations in industrialised and developing nations. Projects range from a local focus to the national and international. Current Advanced Food Systems research includes:

- How to ensure sustainable use of our natural resources in the food industry, with emphasis on management of dairy and ocean resources.
- Determining the allergens in our food and how to create commercial allergen kits to detect them.
- Whether the behavior and interactions of proteins and polysaccharides can shed light on the underlying causes of diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.
- How modern technologies can be used to produce novel food ingredients.
- How plant and microbial enzymes are used in bioprocessing to produce physiologically active compounds.



TO THE LAST DROP

Ceramic membrane technology might sound dull and 'membrane fouling' just plain odd, but Associate Professor Mikel Duke insists it's some of the most exciting research going around.



PHD STUDENT PRASAD INAMDAR: GOOD
WATER GOING DOWN THE DRAIN.

BY MICHAEL QUIN

When Associate Professor Mikel Duke gets the inevitable ‘what do you do?’ question at dinner parties, he tells people all about the relatively recent field of membrane technology that is helping purify our drinking water, skim our milk, remove salt from sea water and bacteria from sewage, not to mention making mines and power plants more sustainable.

He says the principle is simple: membrane acts as a very specific filter that lets water flow through, while catching suspended solids and other substances. With membranes able to filter down to a millionth of the width of a human hair, Duke says they can now filter “pretty much anything from anything”.

“This technology is all around us but we are just at the beginning,” he says. “I can see so many things out there that haven’t been fully explored with this technology.”

It's an exciting time for Duke and his VU Institute for Sustainability and Innovation colleagues. The commercial research opportunities generated by this booming industry are enormous.

Victoria University is already a leader in applied membrane research, but with predictions the worldwide membrane market will double to US\$3 billion by 2020 this could be just the beginning.

In September, researchers at the Institute received almost \$2.7 million in grants from government and industry partners for three innovative desalination projects, mostly to do with membrane technology and its various applications.

The projects will improve efficiency in groundwater desalination techniques, create industry guidelines for regulators and policy makers, and prevent biological fouling – the undesirable accumulation of microorganisms, plants and algae in water systems – during desalination.

The grants – awarded under the auspice of the National Centre of Excellence in Desalination Australia – were among 11 new desalination research projects funded across Australia, with Victoria University involved in more desalination projects than any other university.

Institute director Professor Stephen Gray says it's a welcome acknowledgement of Victoria University's leading role in the development of membrane and desalination technology.

But while this technology is one of the Institute's biggest strengths, and accounts for more than half its research, Gray says it is by no means the only solution to Australia's water-related problems.

He says he and his colleagues are actively undertaking a large number of applied research projects into water recycling, stormwater capture, waterbird ecology and wetland management, as well as human sustainability behaviour and even drought prediction. All are funded by state or national grants.



I can see so many things out there that haven't been fully explored with this technology.

“We can confidently say we are nationally recognised for our applied water recycling research and are becoming increasingly internationally recognised,” Gray says.

The Institute has grown from a handful of staff when it started six years ago to around 20 today. But while its own research capacity has grown, the Institute is also building strong links with related researchers across the University – such as psychologists, engineers or ecologists – to bring a multi-disciplined approach to conserving the all-important resource of water.

Capturing urban runoff

Meanwhile PhD student Prasad Inamdar is looking at ways to ensure the money we're spending to manage the rain that does fall is not money down the drain, by researching rainwater harvesting in urban parklands.

Based in Melbourne's inner west, Inamdar is modelling the geography of potential catchments in local parkland for City West Water.

“I am currently mapping how much runoff there is in these areas,” Inamdar says. “Once that is done I will overlay a map of parks and open spaces with high water demand in the City West Water serviced area.”

Suitable sites where high levels of runoff can be captured and used in the city's non-potable water supply will be selected for detailed catchment design.

“Because of the cost of developing these catchments they need to be viable for at least 20 to 30 years, and they have to be environmentally sustainable and supported by the community,” Inamdar says.

Inamdar, who is working under VU's Professor Chris Perera and the CSIRO's Dr Ashok Sharma, as well as City West Water, says industry relationships are critical for the research to have a practical outcome – something that defines much of VU's water-related research.

Predicting drought

Another research partnership has been with the School of Engineering and Science, where former PhD student Dr Shishutosh Barua and current PhD candidate Prasad Inamdar have produced important applied research.

In June this year Barua, now a water engineer with the State Government's Department of Sustainability and Environment, gained international academic interest and media coverage – from Australian Geographic to the Hindustan Times – for his breakthrough research into the prediction of droughts six months in advance.

The software tool he developed measures several water and climatic variables to assess dryness in an area and then uses past circumstances to predict future drought conditions. It has been used to accurately detect past major historical droughts in Victoria.

“This early detection of droughts will help water managers to implement drought mitigation strategies and measures before droughts occur,” Barua says.

He says previous prediction models focused on rainfall deficiency but that his model also measured water storage, stream flow, water in the soil and evaporation to gain a broader and more accurate assessment of a catchment's dryness.

Barua says the recent 13-year drought showed how vulnerable we are to water shortages in Australia. He hopes his tool will allow governments and water authorities to better prepare for the next inevitable drought.

“There have been frequent droughts over the past 60 years and there will be more frequent droughts in the coming years according to climate change analysis.”

One such partnership involving the School of Social Sciences and Psychology has brought Associate Professor Adrian Fisher and Professor John Cary to look at the human behavioural side of water recycling.

“It’s allowing us to bring social science understandings to water problems as well as using it as a vehicle for the study of applied psychology,” Cary says.

He says understanding public perceptions of water conservation or desalination is crucial to successful behaviour change programs and requires a social science understanding.

“A lot of water management problems are to do with how wisely or unwisely people use the water,” he says.

But this research can also be about how to find acceptance for important, yet not necessarily popular, technologies such as treating waste water from the sewage system to provide safe drinking water.

The technology for this exists and has already been adopted in south-east Queensland, California and Singapore. But Cary says many Australians still need convincing, and governments and water authorities look to researchers like him to lend a hand.

Pipeline pests

Meanwhile Professor John Orbell from the School of Engineering and Science is looking for ways to prevent what is commonly called pipe moss or ‘tobacco weed’ from blocking water pipelines in north-western Victoria.

Pipe moss is in fact colonies of small animals that have been living on the planet for hundreds of millions of years.

Orbell is working with Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water to find ways of stopping these creatures from blocking up the Northern Mallee Pipeline and the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline systems.

“They’re a real pest in freshwater pipeline systems,” Orbell says. “They form sponge-like deposits in pipes and in filters and pumps, and this presents all sorts of problems for the water retailers.”

Innovate or perish

Australia is the driest continent on Earth, and the conservation of water has challenged many generations of Australians to innovate or perish.

It is no overstatement to say the Institute and its partners across the University are leading the way in almost every aspect of water-related research, conservation and innovation, from filtering the tiniest particles in our water to managing our largest reservoirs in times of drought. ●

INSTITUTE FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND INNOVATION (ISI)

Water conservation is a major focus of ISI in both research and education. Applied research focuses on drinking water, wastewater, recycled water, stormwater, industrial water applications, and social behaviour related to water use. Major research is undertaken in membrane filtration and desalination.

ISI also studies aquatic biota and the impact of water use on aquatic ecosystems, as well as ecology and environmental remediation.

ISI collaborators include universities in the USA, China, Korea as well as within Australia. Industry partners include GWMWater, Melbourne Water, City West Water, Central Highlands Water, Western Water and Barwon Water.

Institute for Sustainability and Innovation Werribee Campus, Victoria University (03)





Training with Lazarus

Victoria University has opened a unique state-of-the-art health research and education facility in Melbourne's west.



Training



BY SEAN CUMMINS

“I feel sick,” says Lazarus, a long-term patient at the Western Centre for Health Research and Education (Western CHRE). Hearing him speak comes as something of a shock, since he is made of plastic and rubber.

Lazarus is actually a high-tech manikin that health students, such as nurses, use to learn and practise their profession. The words that came from Lazarus’ lips were actually those of an operator talking into a remote microphone.

Apart from spouting pithy bon mots, Lazarus can also blink, cough, breathe, cry, sweat, change pupil dilation, vomit, bleed profusely, urinate, have a fit and die of all manner of ailments. Controlling Lazarus are three computers – one in his chest that acts like a brain, an external laptop used for monitoring and analysis, and a remote laptop used to remotely control Lazarus’ every movement.

Lazarus is just one piece of state-of-the-art equipment used at the Western CHRE, the first purpose-built research and training facility for medicine and the health sciences in Melbourne’s west. The six-story building is located on the same grounds as Sunshine Hospital.

“We understand there is nothing quite like this centre anywhere else in Australia,” said Western Health Chief Executive Kathryn Cook at the centre’s opening in July this year. “This centre will enable Western Health to use the best technologies, the best teaching spaces, the best approaches.”

Western Health is the major public provider of acute health services throughout western metropolitan Melbourne and apart from Sunshine Hospital, operates the Western Hospital in Footscray and Williamstown Hospital.

Western CHRE cost \$51.6 million and came about through a partnership between Western Health, Victoria University and the University of Melbourne. The Victorian Government contributed \$28.6 million, \$7 million came from the Australian Government, and Victoria University and the University of Melbourne each contributed \$8 million.

The building is architecturally striking. Four floors wrap around an open central atrium with a glass roof, while balconies and glass-walled rooms overlook the void. A meeting room on Level 4 juts out over the atrium. Even the doors are attention-grabbing, with many made from imposing slabs of perforated steel.

The centre operates in open collaboration between Western Health and the two universities.

Offices, libraries, lecture theatres, laboratories, classrooms and even the tea rooms are shared. The centre was built to be used by clinical and non-clinical staff and students for research, patient care training and the study of health sciences.

Researchers will concentrate on diseases that are prevalent in the western region, such as diabetes, heart disease, cancer and osteoporosis. Victoria University will primarily use the centre for mental health nursing, information management in nursing, muscle and exercise science, and exercise rehabilitation.

The research facilities are comprehensive. There are 'hot labs' for work that involves radioactive isotopes, and even animal testing facilities. Victoria University researcher Dr Emma Rybelka is studying mice that have muscular dystrophy in the hope that it will lead to better treatment of the condition in humans.

In a first for Victoria University, researchers will have access to a Physical Containment Level 2 (PC2) lab that is certified for genetic modification work. PC2 labs allow the safe containment and study of micro-organisms that pose a moderate, but treatable, risk to humans.

Aside from research, the focus of Victoria University at Western CHRE is the education and training of nurses and allied health professionals. That's where Lazarus comes in.

Lazarus' home is a bed in a simulation ward, a replica of a modern, fully functional hospital ward, complete with beds, medical equipment, medicines and even hospital staff. The idea is to create an environment that is as close as possible to a real, working hospital and have students undertake simulated scenarios. Students could include undergraduate nurses and doctors, or health professionals learning new skills.

"Student pilots learn to fly on flight simulators – health students learn patient care in hospital simulators," says Western CHRE's Simulation Co-ordinator Janet Beer. "We want students to learn how to react to emergencies. It's as much about teamwork as it is about medical knowledge. You've got to know where to stand, what to say, how to communicate properly, what's expected of you."

During a simulated exercise the roles of the doctors, nurses and staff who would be involved in a real-world situation are filled by students, with support from hospital and teaching staff.

When an announcement for a 'Code Blue' is broadcast over both the centre's and nearby Sunshine Hospital's public announcement system, the students and

hospital staff on duty for the simulation react as if it were a real emergency. They drop what they are doing and rush to the side of poor Lazarus. ●



Passion at a price



○ THE PACIFIC BLACK DUCK (*ANAS SUPERCILIOSA*).



RESEARCH FELLOW DR PATRICK-JEAN GUAY USES DNA ANALYSIS TO DETERMINE THE PURITY OF A BLACK DUCK'S GENETIC MAKE-UP.

BY SEAN CUMMINS

The introduced Mallard duck may be ‘loving’ Australia’s native Pacific Black Duck into extinction.



In New Zealand, wild Pacific Black Ducks reached the brink of extinction less than 100 years after Mallards were introduced.

When a domesticated male Mallard wants to have his way with a native female Pacific Black Duck, there is little to stop him. He’s two or three times as big as the object of his affection, and far more aggressive.

In increasing numbers Pacific Black Ducks (*Anas superciliosa*) are succumbing to the amours of introduced domesticated Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*), and literally being ‘loved’ into extinction.

That’s the fear of Victoria University Research Fellow Dr Patrick-Jean Guay, a native Canadian, who has already seen this happen in North America.

“The American Black Duck is disappearing in North America because of the Mallard duck,” says Guay. “I’m seeing the same problem developing in Australia and want to stop it before it’s too late. Black Ducks and Mallards are merging genetically, and both species may disappear.”

The genetic merging comes about because the hybrid offspring of Mallards and Pacific Black Ducks are fertile, and their mixed genes pass down to future generations and gradually merge to create a distinct gene pool – this process is called introgression. In contrast, when a horse and donkey breed there is little

MALLARD DUCK

Domesticated Mallard ducks have a wide variety of plumage colour variations, including the all-white of the popular Pekin duck. Domesticated Mallards are sedentary and can only fly short distances.

The typical wild Mallard male is a smaller migratory bird and easily identified by the bright green or blue plumage covering its neck and head, with a white collar beneath. The female is a mottled light brown.



○ ○ THE UBIQUITOUS DOMESTICATED MALLARD DUCK (*ANAS PLATYRHYNCHOS*).

threat to their genetic integrity because their offspring, the mule, is sterile and an evolutionary dead-end.

During the course of his research, Guay, from the University's Institute of Sustainability and Innovation and School of Engineering and Science, has found that it is already too late for many duck populations across the globe, which have been made locally extinct, or nearly extinct, due to hybridisation with both wild and domesticated Mallards.

In Australia, it is domesticated Mallards that pose the biggest threat to Pacific Blacks. They can be found on farms and in backyards as pets all over the country – and the world – sporting a variety of colours and plumage. Domesticated ducks are prized for their meat, eggs and down, and can fly only very short distances.

The wild Mallard is much less common in Australia. It is a migratory bird found throughout the temperate and subtropical Americas, Europe, Asia, and North Africa, and has been introduced to Australia and New Zealand for duck shooting. In the wild it lives in wetlands, eats water plants, and is sociable, preferring to be part of a large flock. The wild Mallard is the ancestor of most domesticated ducks, and can interbreed with many of the other species of genus *Anas*. For all their differences, wild and domestic Mallards are still the one species, *Anas platyrhynchos*.

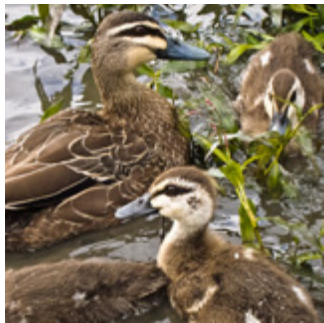
In New Zealand, Pacific Black Ducks reached the brink of extinction less than 100 years after wild Mallards were introduced from North America and Europe. On Lord Howe and Macquarie Islands, Pacific Blacks have all but disappeared.

Mallards have been identified as a serious threat to other duck species as well, including the Hawaiian Duck, Meller's Duck, New Zealand Grey Duck, Mexican Duck and the Yellow-billed Duck.

PACIFIC BLACK DUCK

Can be identified by the black or brown stripe running across their eye, with white stripes above and below. The crown of their head also has a black stripe. A vibrant green patch in the shape of a diamond appears in their wing plumage. Both sexes look very similar.

They are nomadic and can fly between 60 and 100 kilometres per hour, and cover up to 600 kilometres in a day.



OO PACIFIC BLACK MOTHER AND CHICKS

Unlike domesticated Mallards that are more or less earthbound, the hybrids inherit their Black Duck's ability to fly long distances, making it difficult to quarantine compromised duck species.

"Hybrids may leave or stay," says Guay. "They can breed with either their own species or with Mallards, and then fly off into the wild to breed again."

Drought and natural habitat loss also conspire against the Pacific Blacks. With fewer places to go, they are driven from the wild into urban areas where they are much more likely to come into contact with feral domesticated Mallards, whose ancestors escaped or were released from farms or backyards.

Guay is now in the middle of a three-year project to determine once and for all the extent of the threat that Mallards pose in Australia.

Guay says: "The overall aim of the project is to gather hard evidence we can bring to the government and say, 'Look, people have been saying there isn't a problem, but there is'. We need a final answer or proof on whether there is a problem so action can be taken."

With help from PhD student Alice Taysom he is performing a painstaking census of as many Black and Mallard ducks as possible, from all over Australia, to determine the current extent of hybridisation. He started collecting data more than six years ago after he became interested in the plight of the Pacific Black Duck during his PhD research.

What makes a duck census particularly difficult is that hybrids and purebreds often look the same, which rules out making a simple visual identification of a bird's species. Hence the duo must obtain biological samples that can be taken back to the lab for DNA analysis.

"What we do is capture a live duck and take a little blood sample," says Guay. "If it's dead we can take a tissue sample. We can get all the data we want if we get some blood or a feather."

The DNA analysis determines what percentage comes from its purebred ancestors. A first generation hybrid duck would yield a DNA result of 50/50; half of the DNA is of Pacific Black Duck origin, and half is of Mallard origin.

If the research proves that Black Ducks are disappearing, what are the implications?

“That’s the million-dollar question,” says Guay. “We just don’t know.”

The loss of just one species from an ecosystem can have enormous consequences. Healthy ecosystems rely on a state of harmony between resident species, which all depend on one another in some way. As an example, Guay says it could be that the Black Duck is eating an insect that would otherwise be a plague on an important native plant.

The loss of the Pacific Black Duck from Australia is not inevitable. The solution will require a concerted effort on the part of both government and duck owners.

“The solution is to segregate domestic ducks from wild ducks,” says Guay. “People shouldn’t release their pet ducks into the wild, and it’s important not to feed ducks in an urban setting. If we properly chaperone the Mallards, it is much harder for them to make those unwelcome advances.” ●

CONSERVATION'S UGLY DUCKLINGS

Aside from Mallards, one of the threats to the future of Black Ducks is habitat loss. Two types of habitat that Black Ducks rely on – salt marshes and mangroves – are under serious threat in Victoria.

This is the conclusion of Professor Paul Boon from Victoria University's Institute for Sustainability and Innovation. He has just completed a 500-page report, 'Mangroves and coastal salt marshes of Victoria'.

Mangroves and salt marshes are important breeding grounds for many bird species, as well as fish and other marine and estuarine species.

During his four-year study, Professor Boon (along with ten research colleagues who also contributed to the report) found that human activities have destroyed up to 20 per cent of Victoria's coastal marshes. Even more marshland is predicted to disappear as sea levels rise due to climate change.

His surveys found that public knowledge of the environmental role fulfilled by salt marshes to be almost non-existent, and that most people saw Victoria's salt marshes and mangroves as just ugly ducklings on the landscape.

"Most people saw salt marshes as little more than muddy, smelly breeding grounds for mosquitoes," says Boon. The public profile of mangroves is little better.

Boon's report makes a number of recommendations, including a change in legislation – mangroves and salt marshes, currently have little legal protection – and better education of land managers and the public.



STUDENTS GO GREEN

○ A REFURBISHMENT OF TRAINING KITCHENS AT FOOTSCRAY NICHOLSON CAMPUS INCLUDED AN ARRAY OF SUSTAINABILITY FEATURES.

BY JIM BUCKELL

With the Federal Government's carbon pricing legislation now passed by the Senate, a price on industry carbon emissions will come into effect on 1 July 2012. Despite the naysayers, many commentators believe there are economic advantages to the clean-energy surge Australia is about to witness. Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Dawkins is one of them.

In September, Professor Dawkins co-authored an article with VU research fellow Dr Alex English in The Australian's Higher Education Supplement in which he said "there are good reasons to predict that we are about to witness a steady and growing stimulus to economic activity because of the shift away from carbon".

He highlighted benefits to tertiary education including training across the trades and foreshadowed the introduction of sustainability units in all VU courses over the next few years. Professor Dawkins also noted that students "are acutely attuned to employment opportunities and increasingly demand courses that address the environmental agenda".

So, what is the green future for VU students? The path has been roughed out by the Federal Government's Education for Sustainability action plan, a blueprint encouraging all Australians to live and work sustainably. Rolling out the plan under the direction of Pro Vice-Chancellor Academic and Students, Professor Greg Baxter, is project officer Dr Colin Hocking, who has been working on a strategy that rests on three core elements: social, environmental and economic. Dr Hocking calls these "the three P's" – people, planet and profit.

"The focus has been to provide our students with the knowledge, skills and motivation to plan and act for change towards sustainability in their future workplaces," Hocking says. "We've started by identifying existing initiatives staff have taken in their courses, working out how these fit within the strategy and linking up educators across the University who have embedded sustainability in their courses."

So far, the early achievers award is going to the vocational education sector. Many of the trade programs already have green elements. Electricians, plumbers and gasfitters can train in the installation of solar panel and hot water system solar boosters.

In the construction trades, the bricklaying program has overhauled its training workshop to achieve best practice in recycling, water use and energy efficiency.

"Bricklaying is a pretty dirty job, but they work in a clean environment now," says industry liaison manager in the Faculty of Technical and Trades Innovation, Neville Penny.

Penny's job has been to guide the introduction of sustainability practices throughout the trades, and he's been delighted with the positive response. A Practice Firm has been built at the Newport Campus which will integrate many of the sustainability initiatives in building design and construction when it opens next year, showcasing the environmental awareness that is now inbuilt in VU courses.



Our students are starting to find that if you cannot speak the language of sustainability you are less employable.

Co-ordinator of the Advanced Diploma in Building Design course Sue Habib has been leading sustainability in building design for six years. The course has developed a strong reputation for its sustainability initiatives, and is underpinned with the knowledge that 80 per cent of environmental impact occurs at the design stage.

“Our students shine when they go on to study architecture and our latest figures show that 94 per cent of our graduates are employed in the industry,” Habib says.

Meanwhile, a \$3.6 million refurbishment of the School of Hospitality’s Footscray Nicholson Campus facilities has included installing an array of sustainability features.

Water use in the kitchens has been cut by up to 95 per cent through recycling and the introduction of innovations including a waterless air-cooled wok. Lights turn off automatically when spaces are vacated and the use of non-toxic detergents and efficient fat and waste disposal systems has cut back dangerous waste dramatically.

Sustainability rollout has been steady across vocational education, and there’s still more to come. The new Construction Futures building underway at the Sunshine Campus will showcase a 6-Green-Star energy design and the latest in sustainability – including renewable energy, solar design and water conservation – when it opens in 2013.

In higher education, initiatives are not as widespread, but a few stand-out programs are being used as models. In the School of Sport and Exercise Science, Greg Dingle has been teaching a subject in sport and recreation sustainability for the past three years.

“We provide students with a strategy toolkit for understanding the basic issues of sustainability and how to address them in sports management,” Dingle says. “It has become a key literacy for the industry in the 21st century and our students

are starting to find that if you cannot speak the language of sustainability you are less employable.”

Other initiatives in engineering, business and multimedia are gaining traction as the Education for Sustainability plan takes shape. “It’s still early days,” says Hocking. “But we’re working far more collaboratively now across the University.

It’s a two-way approach, top down and bottom up. By next year we should be starting to meet in the middle.

“That’s around the time the carbon pricing regime kicks in, and industry, government and the community look more closely at sustainability options and the credentials of the tradespeople, professionals and educators who will help implement and manage the fast-approaching clean-technology revolution. ●

Sun-Herald CITY2SURF Westpac



LIAM ADAMS CROSSES THE LINE AHEAD OF 80,000 OTHER COMPETITORS AT THIS YEAR'S CITY2SURF ROAD RACE IN SYDNEY.

In the fast lane



○ ○ LIAM ADAMS IN THE FOOTSCRAY PARK CAMPUS LIBRARY.

BY KAMINI RAJARETHNAM

Elite student athlete Liam Adams added another trophy to his collection by winning Sydney's 2011 City2Surf road race in August.

Watch Liam Adams run and you will see why he has won the Male Athlete of the Year award at the Australian University Sport Awards not once, but twice, in 2008 and 2010. He is focused, intense and determined. Put simply, he is a 25-year-old speeding bullet who is turning a lot of heads in national and international long distance running.

Growing up in a sporty family, Adams realised at the age of 10 that he had a natural talent for running. At 14, he decided to take up the sport seriously by joining his local athletics club and training to compete outside the school system.

His running successes over the past 10 years have led to countless accolades. As well as winning this year's City2Surf, his tally this year alone includes gold medals at the Victorian Cross Country Championships, the Australian Cross Country Championships and the Melbourne Marathon. Last year Adams was the first Australian to cross the finish line at the IAAF World Cross Country Championships in Poland, a feat he considers his best performance to date.



Disciplines such as physiology, biomechanics and psychology have allowed me to become a more professional athlete.

The five-time Australian cross country champion has been applying his athletics knowledge to his Victoria University Bachelor of Exercise Science and Human Movement.

“My experiences in training and competition have helped me relate to the different principles and disciplines of exercise science,” Adams says. “The fact that I’ve got the opportunity to apply and put these scientific principles into my training allows me to gain a better understanding of what I’ve learnt in my coursework.”

Now in his final year, Adams was initially interested in pursuing carpentry as a vocation but decided to enrol in the Bachelor course because of his passion and interest in sport.

“I chose to study at VU because of its reputation in the health, science, and sport and recreation sectors,” Adams says. “I hope to use the practical experience and theoretical knowledge of my Bachelor to work in the athletics field.”

This year was the first time he had entered the annual 14-kilometre Sydney City2Surf race from Hyde Park in Sydney’s CBD to Bondi Beach. Sometimes called the world’s biggest fun run – but taken very seriously by professional runners – Adams crossed the line ahead of 80,000 keen competitors.

Having twice won the Australian University Sport’s Male Athlete of the Year – the awards represent more than one million students at 42 member universities across Australia – it is little wonder he was named VU’s Male Athlete of the Year in 2008, picking up the same award in 2010.

Nothing if not modest about his outstanding achievements, Adams said of his 2010 VU award: “It was a shock as I was up against such great athletes who I honestly thought deserved it more than I did.”

STUDENT ATHLETE SUPPORT PROGRAM

Victoria University is a member of the Elite Athlete Friendly University (EAFU) Network. Part of the Australian Sports Commission's National Athlete Career and Education program, the EAFU Network provides the assistance and flexibility necessary for Australia's leading athletes to pursue both their sporting goals and academic aspirations.

Sport Services Manager Scott Cashmere is VU's point of contact for EAFU. He has witnessed many elite athletes disengage from their studies and fail to graduate because of difficulties juggling studies and training schedules.

Cashmere says VU's Student Athlete Support Program allows elite student athletes to pursue sporting opportunities while achieving their academic potential. The program offers support such as financial assistance, liaising with faculties on an athlete's study schedules and providing access to sporting facilities.

Elite runner Liam Adams is a big supporter of the program.

"It's great to have the help of the Student Athlete Support Program on my side," says Adams. "It even provided financial support when I represented Victoria University at the World University Cross Country Championships and World University Games."

His weighty medal payload also includes two silver medals won at the Cross Country World University Championships – the equivalent of the Olympic Games for university students – in 2008 and 2010.

Last year, Australian University Sport established the AUS Honour Roll, which Adams was immediately inducted into.

Adams' next goal is to run personal best times during the summer track season to qualify for the Aussie 2012 London Olympics athletics team. He wants to compete in the 5000 or 10,000-metre track races, or perhaps the Olympic marathon.

His last race in 2011 will be Australia's premiere distance race, the 10,000-metre Zatopek:10, to be held at the new Victorian Athletics Centre in Albert Park, Melbourne.

"If I miss the opportunity to go to London next year, I have my sights set on the 2014 Commonwealth Games – or the next Olympics in 2016," he says.

With little downtime outside of training and studying, Adams has not given much thought to what he would like to do once he finishes his degree.

"For now, I've just focused on finishing my course," he says. "I've been able to apply the knowledge gained in the different disciplines of exercise science to improve my sporting performance. Disciplines such as physiology, biomechanics and psychology have allowed me to gain a better knowledge of my sport and become a more professional athlete." ●



MASTERFUL DEEDS

BY KAMINI RAJARETHNAM

Alumnus Karthikeyan Vaitheeswaran attributes his Victoria University MBA to winning a prestigious national award in recognition of his outstanding community service helping survivors of the 2004 Tsunami in his home country of India.

○ ○ PREVIOUS PAGE: MBA GRADUATE
KARTHIKEYAN VAITHEESWARAN
SPEAKING WITH A VILLAGE FISHERMAN.

If you're ever feeling cynical about human nature, meet Karthikeyan Vaitheeswaran. The self-effacing community welfare worker doesn't think the work he has been doing for more than a decade is anything special, but others beg to differ.

Vaitheeswaran's dedication to help Indian survivors of the 2004 Tsunami overcome adversity was recognised at the 2011 Australian Alumni Excellence Awards held in Chennai, India last August.

The federal Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Jobs and Workplace Relations Senator Chris Evans presented Vaitheeswaran with the award, which honours alumni who have attained exemplary achievements in their field, or have contributed significantly to the betterment of Australian education and their institution or alumni community.

Growing up in the bustling city of Trichy in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, Vaitheeswaran says he was inspired to help others by a childhood hero, a leader in his community who worked tirelessly to rally and motivate the local youth to address societal issues and fight against civic apathy.

“I admired him and his selfless service to society which motivated me to pursue community work when I was a boy,” Vaitheeswaran says.

After completing a BA in economics and a postgraduate diploma in marketing management and advertising, he enrolled in the inaugural Master of Science (NGO Management) course at India’s Madurai Kamaraj University, which motivated him to pursue a career aimed at improving society and helping the needy.

After five years working in community development in India, Vaitheeswaran chose to pursue a Master of Business Administration (MBA) at Victoria University’s Victoria Graduate School of Business to add for-profit management skills to his resumé, which would give him a unique advantage in his vocation.

“The MBA helped me to apply the management principles and concepts I learnt to my current work,” he says. “The Project Management subject was particularly useful for the time-bound community development projects that I currently manage, and the international exposure of our lecturers meant I was exposed to the latest trends in the industry.”

Vaitheeswaran also credits his lecturers who understood his needs as an international student by customising teaching methods that allowed him to perform to his potential.

However, what happened on Boxing Day 2004 would solidify Vaitheeswaran’s calling in life. He was in the final stages of completing his MBA program when he saw the news reports of the 9.0 magnitude earthquake that triggered the massive tsunami that struck much of southern Asian coastline, including the Indian coast around Chennai, not far from where he grew up. As he watched the death toll climb, Vaitheeswaran had one thought: he had to go and help.

“Being in Melbourne thousands of kilometres away from Chennai, I was thinking of my inability to be a part of the relief work,” he says.

2004 TSUNAMI IMPACT ON INDIA

- While 10,749 lives were lost in all of India, the state of Tamil Nadu on the south-east coast reported most fatalities with 7983 deaths.
- Seventy-five per cent of the fatalities were women and children.
- 2260 kilometres of coastline was affected in the states of Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh.
- Waves reached heights of 10 metres on the mainland and penetrated up to three kilometres inland.
- Coastal fisheries and agriculture were the worst affected economic activities.
- Environmental impacts included the salination of groundwater, massive coastline erosion and the extensive spread of toxic waste.

After completing his final semester, he returned to Chennai and joined the Tsunami Relief and Rehabilitation Program – sponsored by the local state government and various NGOs – as a volunteer for three months, mobilising resources and teaching courses on micro-enterprise development to women and youth eager to restart their businesses.

The International Labour Organisation – a United Nations agency that promotes social justice and human and labour rights – offered him a full-time position as project officer for a skills development and vocational training program for survivors of the tsunami.

This new role allowed him to continue fostering community dialogue and raising awareness of important issues such as livelihood recovery, education, human rights and economic empowerment. Almost 3000 people in Cuddalore and Nagapattinam in Tamil Nadu including fishermen, youth and women were trained to become qualified plumbers, electricians, boat engine mechanics and computer technicians.

Following the success of the project, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) recruited Vaitheeswaran as a National Consultant for Livelihoods under the Fisheries Management for Sustainable Livelihoods Project. A joint initiative of FAO and the governments of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, the ongoing objective is to develop a long-term strategy and policy framework for the future management and use of marine fisheries. When the project finishes at the end of 2011, it is estimated it will have benefited over 200,000 fishermen and their families.

As the project draws to a close, Vaitheeswaran is looking forward to a new challenge that will take him to New Delhi in the New Year. ●

Girls' rules

The Victoria University Women's Aussie Rules football team has been annihilating sides across the country that dare to meet them out on the field.



BY SEAN CUMMINS

The crushing score was 77-0 when the whistle blew on the women's Aussie Rules grand final. Victoria University had just defeated RMIT to become champions without parallel at the Southern University Games (SUG) held in Geelong during July.

VU's Aussie Rules girls have only lost one game out of 23 played over their last three tournaments. Apart from the Geelong SUG trophy, they hold the women's Aussie Rules trophies for the 2010 Bendigo SUG, and the 2010 Perth Australian University Games (AUG).

The extraordinary run of domination by the girls was publicly proclaimed by Victoria University when they were recently announced as VU's 2010 Sporting Team of the Year.

Aussie Rules football is often thought the domain of males – it's tough, it's hard, and blood gets spilt. Breanna Wright, team manager of the VU women's team, has been playing with the girls for three years. When people find out she plays Aussie Rules, Wright says their reaction is often one of disbelief: "They

say, 'Really? Are you sure?'" The reality is that in recent years girls have been storming footy grounds in ever-increasing numbers.

According to the AFL's most recent statistics, by 2009 there were over 80,000 women and girls playing in Aussie Rules competitions across Australia. Twelve of the 22-strong VU Women's squad also play outside of university competitions at the highest levels of women's football in Australia. These include clubs in the Victorian Women's Football League (VWFL) and the team representing Victoria in the Women's National Championships (WNC). One of the girls, Ashley Guest, played in the winning grand final teams of both those competitions. Having such depth of talent is at the heart of the VU women's success. But how does a university team attract such elite players?

Step forward coach Michael Sandry. Sandry has had a large influence in shaping the team's formidable talent. He not so incidentally works for VU as a student recruitment officer, coaches the VFWL's Melbourne University Mugar (named after, but separate from, Melbourne University), and also used to play for the Mulgrave Seniors in the Eastern Football League.

Appointed just two years ago, Sandry had a plan from the beginning. "I leveraged my coaching contacts to find out which elite players were students at VU, and did some recruiting to bring together the best girls," says Sandry. "I also introduced more training and taught set plays and team positioning." In one instance of using pro training techniques, Sandry ordered the team into freezing, mid-winter Port Phillip Bay between matches during the Geelong SUG to aid the recovery of quite a few very sore muscles. "I screamed at him the whole time," says Wright.

Experiencing pain is not unusual. Players have suffered dislocated shoulders – even a broken coccyx. "The girls are just as physical as the boys," says Sandry. At the end of a tournament of six or seven games the girls are covered in purple-yellow bruises. "We're going for the ball, though," insists Wright. "It's not about trying to harm each other."

If physical domination were the goal, then the team would not attract the physical range of girls that it does. "We have really girly girls, and others have grown up playing backyard footy with their brothers," says Wright. "It's really diverse and the mix of skills you end up with is what makes it work." In fact, Wright says the reason she puts up with ice-cold beach sessions and risks broken bones comes down to her teammates. "They're a great bunch of girls to be around. It's mainly the group of girls that's kept me playing."



Girl's rules



100 YEARS OF FEMALE FOOTY



 CARLTON LADIES FOOTBALL TEAM, 1933

Girl's rules

Female passion for playing Aussie Rules comes as no surprise to Dr Rob Hess, a Senior Lecturer in the School of Sport and Exercise Science at Victoria University. Hess is an Aussie Rules fanatic and a widely recognised expert in the game. He has co-authored *"A National Game: The History of Australian Rules Football"*, and compiled, edited or contributed to more than ten other books about Aussie Rules.

Hess has also studied the little-known history of female players, uncovering evidence of games played by women as far back as 1915. The first game took place in Western Australia - not the football heartland of Victoria, as many fans expect. Victoria didn't host a women's game until 1918; even South Australia beat Victoria to the bounce with a game held earlier that year.

Hess also notes that 40–50 per cent of spectators at Australian Rules games are female. Other football codes might only attract 15 per cent female participation.

Clearly, women love their Aussie Rules, and have for a long time.

TAKING THE LEAD IN CHINA

算与电子健康联合实验室揭牌仪式
GUCAS-VU Joint Lab for Social Computing and E-Health Research





VU IN CHINA

VU partners (teaching)

- Liaoning University (Shenyang)
- Henan University (Kaifeng)
- Beijing Jiaotong University (Beijing)
- Henan College of Finance and Taxation (Zhengzhou)
- Central University of Finance and Economics (Beijing)
- Shandong Jianzhu University (Jinan)
- Sichuan University (Chengdu)

VU partners (research)

- Beijing Jiaotong University (Beijing)
- Graduate University of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (Beijing)
- Central University of Finance and Economics (Beijing)

VU qualifications offered

- Bachelors and Masters degrees, diploma and certificate courses
- Foundation programs
- University preparatory courses
- English language training

VU fields of study

- Business
- Accounting
- Nursing
- Public Health
- Information Technology
- Education
- Teaching English as a Second Language
- Engineering
- Law

BY JIM BUCKELL

VU continues to lead the way in offshore teaching and research in China.

The launch of an e-health laboratory at the Beijing Graduate University of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (GUCAS) in July is a new milestone in the strengthening partnerships between Victoria University and Chinese tertiary education providers.

The lab is a collaboration between GUCAS and Victoria University, providing an innovative platform for cross-disciplinary research in information science, health and social computing.

Spearheading VU's role in the joint project is Professor Yanchun Zhang, named in 2010 as one of China's 1000 Talents, a program to attract expatriate academics back to China. Professor Zhang heads VU's Centre for Applied Informatics, whose research into data mining and social computing, particularly in the area of e-health, is internationally renowned.

The joint venture is one of many being nurtured in the relationships established between VU and its Chinese partners, which began in 1999 when the University first entered the Chinese market with an agreement to teach at Liaoning University, north-east of Beijing.

 OPENING PAGE:
VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE GRADUATE
UNIVERSITY OF CHINESE ACADEMY OF
SCIENCE (GUCAS), PROFESSOR GANG
SU WITH VICTORIA UNIVERSITY VICE-
CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT PROFESSOR
PETER DAWKINS AT THE OPENING OF THE
E-HEALTH LABORATORY AT GUCAS IN JULY
THIS YEAR.

VU now offers courses at six other universities and colleges in China, with enrolments of almost 4000 students studying programs ranging from English language courses, vocational education, and bachelors and postgraduate qualifications.

Teaching and learning continues to flourish but research collaborations are also blossoming. Earlier this year a research agreement was signed with Beijing Jiaotong University. The memorandum covers joint projects in transportation, logistics and supply chain management, telecommunications engineering and industrial economics.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Dawkins says the relationships developed in China over the past 12 years have put VU at the forefront of offshore delivery in China among Australian providers. One example is the 'Joint School' status of the Victoria University degree program at Liaoning University.

"This places us in a very select category as one of only two such partnerships approved by the Chinese Government for Australian universities and 30 worldwide, out of several hundred approved overseas qualifications currently delivered in China," he says.

"This special recognition as a 'model' foreign co-operation program provides more flexibility for our partnership with Liaoning to develop new courses with fast-track approvals."

Another strength of the relationship is the status attached to VU degree programs offered in China. Partners such as Liaoning, Beijing Jiaotong, GUCAS and the Central University of Finance and Economics are highly ranked institutions in China and admission is highly competitive.



This places us in a very select category as one of only two such partnerships approved by the Chinese Government for Australian universities.

As China marches on to become the world's leading economy over the next decade, the Chinese are looking overseas to fill the gaps in their growing appetite for skills and knowledge. One of the identified needs is greater proficiency in English language for graduates.

"This is providing opportunities for us because of our established strength in teaching students from a non-English speaking background," Dawkins says.

In one recent initiative in this area, VU's School of Education is working with the University of Oregon in the US to develop an international program for students in courses delivered in Melbourne, China and the US.

VU's Associate Dean of Teaching and Learning in the Faculty of Arts, Education and Human Development, Associate Professor Bill Eckersley is working with Professor Yong Zhao, Associate Dean of Global Education at the University of Oregon, to explore opportunities to develop a global education degree.

"The concept is to offer a degree that could provide students at Victoria University, the University of Oregon and one or more partner universities in China the opportunity to experience learning and teaching in a global context," Eckersley says.

"It's still at the development stage but the aim is to provide a truly global education. Students would spend at least one year in each country experiencing authentic global learning experiences and lasting connections to education, government and industry. It will also enable VU to play a leading role in providing opportunities to engage students as teachers of English and Mandarin in schools and tertiary institutions in three international settings."

The global degree concept is just one example of the growing range of collaborations made possible because of VU's longstanding relationships with China. ●

FOR THE LOVE OF WORDS



BY ANN MARIE ANGEBRANDT

Everyone who works at Victoria University knows the name Bruno Lettieri. For almost 20 years he has been sharing his passion for language and a genuine love of writing and writers.

○ OPENING PAGE: BRUNO LETTIERI

Bruno Lettieri has been teaching in Victoria University's Professional Writing and Editing (PWE) (TAFE) programs for nearly two decades. His name appears with near-daily regularity in staff global emails urging support for his department's latest project.

It has put him on the receiving end of a few nasty emails from colleagues demanding he stop the incessant promotion. But there are far more supportive messages from those who have been converted by his passion for words and writers he wants to share.

Among PWE's most popular projects are the Rotunda public conversations with Australian writers, now in their tenth year. Rotunda has brought the likes of Helen Garner, Michael Leunig, John Clarke and Brian Dawe, Alice Pung, John Weldon, Kate Holden, Don Watson, John Marsden and Arnold Zable to the Toniq Bar at the University's Footscray Park Campus where they share their inspirations and writing experiences.



My own story shows that in a generation the power of words can effect enormous change.

Sometimes Rotunda goes on the road, taking poetry lovers in red double-decker buses to seaside readings around Melbourne's west, or football followers to the Western Bulldogs' Whitten Oval to hear from leading sports writers.

Audiences are usually made up of addicted regulars – members of local book clubs and writers groups, and VU staff and students – but increasingly, there are newcomers who relish an opportunity for an intimate encounter with one of Australia's literary luminaries.

Lettieri says people often tell him that their Rotunda experience is what a university should be like.

"We make it festive with music, food and drink, and we don't patronise or pretend that writing is only for the highly consecrated," he says.

The genuine connection between the writers (whom Lettieri dubs "Rotundians"), an eager audience, and Lettieri's endless enthusiasm make the evenings special and are the reason Lettieri is able to attract a rolling festival of high profile writers.

"When I approach a writer to be a guest I always tell them they'll never get a more intelligent, engaged or energised audience," Lettieri says. "Most of them end up returning for repeat appearances."

Despite growing up as an Italian migrant kid in a home with few books in the once working-class suburb of Port Melbourne, Lettieri's passion for literature comes from an early love of letter writing. As a boy, he began collecting evocative phrases from books and newspaper articles that he carefully transcribed into one of his many scrapbooks. It is a passion that continues to this day.

"My own story shows that in a generation the power of words can affect enormous change."

Lettieri has always been a teacher – secondary school, Indonesian language, creative writing, adult and teenage literacy – and he’s used his reluctance to follow a set curriculum to inspire and motivate his students in offbeat ways. His students move their desks so they can look out the window, they go to restaurants, they write about what they know – not what the teacher tells them.

The focus of the 58 year old these days is adult literacy, where he shows his students that writing can be used to sharpen self-awareness and manage their world.

“Creative writing classes, when they’re done well, move people,” says Lettieri. “They have their own intrinsic value and don’t have to have measurable goals.”

He has taught many migrants as well as students who are barely literate. But they all have stories to share and deserve to have their work published, he says. Lettieri helped develop *Platform*, a PWE student-run anthology, now in its tenth year. Work from professional writers sits alongside contributions from authors who have never seen their name in print.

Last July, PWE hosted a ‘Write Out’ in the Melbourne western suburb of Werribee as more than 100 writers of all skill levels and 15 presenters gathered for an afternoon of high-energy writing games, story swaps and exercises designed to transform the traditionally lonely life of a writer.

“There was lots of crazy energy and it took away the excuses of those who say they don’t have any motivation or inspiration to put their ideas and feelings down on paper,” Lettieri says.

Outside VU, Lettieri has helped establish Apricot Tree Press with fellow VU writing teacher Margaret McCarthy. It publishes the work of writers who may not have received commercial attention but deserve to have their stories told. Ironically, its most recent author, Barry Garner, was one of Lettieri’s first students when he came to teach at VU in 1992.

ented by Professional Writing & Editing in the School of Creative Industries
by Office of Industry & Community Engagement & Creative Education
U.EDU.AU/CREATIVEINDUSTRIES/P...TING



PHOTOS: PAM KLEEMANN/PWE © 2011

- ABOVE: JOHN CLARKE
- BELOW: CATE KENNEDY
- BELOW RIGHT: JOHN MARSDEN
- TOP RIGHT: ALICE PUNG



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**WE DON'T PATRONISE
OR PRETEND
THAT WRITING IS
FOR THE HIGHLY
CONSECRATED.**



"I call Barry my 20-year project. Here was an older man with a nervous tremor who had a patchwork of education and a deep yearning to express himself. He has now published a book."

Lettieri says he's grateful he's been given space and autonomy by the School of Creative Writing to manage projects like Rotunda in his own way within the prescriptive world of a university.

This year, Rotunda has received a Vice-Chancellor's staff award, which is a nice acknowledgement, but not necessary, he says.

From the time he convinced his first Rotundian, journalist Martin Flanagan, to come to the University, Lettieri has helped lift the profile of the University's TAFE writing and editing program.

On his wish-list of future Rotunda guests would be someone like songwriter and musician Paul Kelly or, in an ideal world, the deceased *Zorba the Greek* author, Nikos Kazantzakis. *Zorba*, according to Lettieri, embodies the spirit of an Aboriginal word for which he has yet to find an English equivalent for his scrapbook, which means 'standing up straight in your own aliveness'.

"Zorba had that wonderful sense of dignity and self assuredness," Lettieri says. "He delighted in the world as it was – and he would dance." ●

Honouring Excellence



BY ANN MARIE ANGEBRANDT

Victoria University has more than 80,000 alumni residing and working in more than 140 countries. In October 2011, the University honoured the success of a select group of these graduates with its first annual Alumni Awards.

Victoria University's Alumni Relations Office received more than 60 nominations for the four categories represented at its inaugural Alumni Awards: Distinguished; Honorary Lifetime Service; Young Achiever; and Outstanding Student.

Distinguished Alumni Award

Victorian Treasurer The Hon. Kim Wells received VU's first Distinguished Alumni Award for his excellence in leadership and community service. He is a graduate of VU's Master of Business (Accounting and Finance) in 1997, Graduate Diploma of Business (Accounting) in 1990 and Bachelor of Business (Accounting) in 1987. Wells has served as a Member of Parliament for 19 years, representing the seat of Scoresby in Melbourne's outer east, and been State Treasurer in the Liberal Government since November 2010.

Prior to entering Parliament, Wells worked in various accounting roles, and as a YMCA youth counsellor in the United States. He was appointed the Liberal Party's senior spokesman in 2000 for the portfolios of Corrections, Police and Emergency



THE HONORABLE KIM WELLS
(RIGHT) WITH VICE CHANCELLOR
PETER DAWKINS



DAVID SOUTHWICK, MP

Services, and Treasury. Following the election of the Liberal Government in 2010, he became Treasurer and delivered the Government's first budget in May 2011.

Honorary Lifetime Alumni Service Award

Footscray legend Wally Hopkins and community-minded entrepreneur David Southwick were each recognised for a VU Honorary Lifetime Alumni Service Award.

Hopkins was an early student of VU's original predecessor institution, Footscray Technical School. He graduated as an apprentice engineer in 1939 from a class that showed exceptional sporting abilities.

In 1988, those same class members held their first reunion to mark their 50th anniversary since enrolling at the school. A proud alumnus, Hopkins has continued to organise reunions every year since, with 15 of the original classmates still gathering each October.

Hopkins also has a remarkable 75-year involvement with the First Footscray Scout Troop, receiving the Silver Kangaroo – the highest award in Australian Scouting. For his community service, he received an Order of Australia Medal, and was named Maribyrnong Citizen of the Year.

David Southwick, a Liberal Member of Parliament for Caulfield since 2010, completed VU's Bachelor of Business (Retail Management) in 1991. He was heavily involved in student politics and received an Honorary Fellowship for his service on the University Council.

Since graduating, he has demonstrated endless enthusiasm, community spirit and entrepreneurial flair while remaining a passionate advocate for VU. Southwick was chairman of the VU Alumni Advisory Group, helped establish the Executive Education Unit in the Faculty of Business and Law, and set up the first Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) group to showcase the entrepreneurial skills of VU students at national competitions.

ALUMNI REWARDS

All graduates of Victoria University and its forerunner institutions are alumni of VU. Current students, staff, former staff and friends of the University are also welcomed as members of VU's alumni community.

Financial members receive benefits such as professional networking opportunities and ongoing library access.

Other benefits include receiving VU's Connections magazine twice a year, invitations to events, discounts at health clinics and fitness centres, concession rates with the Malthouse Theatre, and much more.

VU's alumni community includes Melbourne-based networks, which are grouped into course and study areas, such as Law and Community Development, so members can keep in contact with graduates in the same industry.

There are also VU alumni chapters throughout Asia, including Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Vietnam, China, Thailand and Bangladesh.

For more information about VU's alumni community, phone +61 3 9919 1017 or email alumni@vu.edu.au



OO CR SARAH CARTER AND WALLY HOPKINS

YOUNG ACHIEVER FINALISTS

Ali Abdo

Principal Osteopath, Advance Osteopathy Group
Master of Health Science (Osteopathy), 2010
BA of Science - Clinical Sciences, 2008
Graduate Diploma in Exercise for Rehabilitation, 2004
BA of Applied Science (Human Movement), 2003

Chanel Costabir

Director, The Lingerie Boutique
BA of Psychology (Honours), 2010
BA of Business (Marketing)/BA of Psychology, 2009

Andrew Flynn

CEO, Samoa International Cricket Association
BA of Exercise Science and Human Movement, 2010
BA of Arts (Sport Administration), 2010

Amy Wood

Barrister-at-Law
BA of Business (Management), 2007
BA of Laws (Honours), 2007

Southwick continues to host VU's Business Breakfast Series, is Deputy Chair for the VU Foundation, and enjoys guest-lecturing.

Young Achiever Alumni Award

Sarah Carter, the youngest woman to be elected Mayor of Maribyrnong, and Jacinta Torres Gomez, a devoted advocate of women's rights, each received a VU Young Achiever Award.

After completing a Bachelor of Communications (Public Relations) in 2006, Carter was elected Maribyrnong mayor in 2010 at the age of 32. She received her award for her highly original practices as mayor, including developing creative partnerships, particularly around issues of good governance and sustainable planning. She was also recognised for her outstanding community service as a member of the boards of LeadWest, Western Melbourne Tourism and several other organisations.

Gomez, a 2008 Bachelor of Education graduate, was acknowledged for her outstanding commitment to improving the lives of the less fortunate, both in Australia and overseas. She undertook a year-long exchange to Mexico for which she received the Victorian Teachers Credit Union Award, and was then accepted in the World Vision graduate program in Bolivia.

She received an Office for Government School Education award for her work with the Victorian Government for connecting schools with the broader community and recently co-founded The Crimson Project, aimed at young women in developing countries around issues of menstruation.

Outstanding Student Alumni Awards

VU's most decorated current student athlete, Liam Adams, received the Outstanding Student Alumni Award for his ability to inspire fellow students. Adams has excelled in his sport of cross-country running both nationally and

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI FINALISTS

Deborah Borg

Vice President, Human Capital Planning
and Development, Dow Chemical
Master of Business
(Training and Change Management)
2000,
BA of Business (Management) 1998

Paul Constantinou

Chairman, Quest Serviced Apartments,
Diploma of Catering and Hotel,
Management, 1976

Helen Herbertson

Lecturer/Postgraduate and Honours
Coordinator (Dance),
School of Performing Arts, University of
Melbourne, Master of Arts, 2003

HONORARY LIFETIME SERVICE ALUMNI FINALISTS

Susan Cheah

Executive Director, Sunway Management,
Doctor of the University Honoris Causa,
2004,
BA of Commerce and Accounting, 1970

internationally, and recently won the Sydney City2Surf road race against 80,000 runners. He has twice been named VU's Male Athlete of the Year (2008, 2010), and in those same years received the prestigious Australian University Sport (AUS) Male Athlete of the Year.

In 2010, the AUS established the Australian University Sport Honour Roll, into which he was inducted. Adams has also represented Australia at the world cross country championships. He has also represented VU on several occasions, each time winning gold medals.

A Bachelor of Exercise and Human Movement student, Adams was noted for balancing his study commitments exceptionally well despite having a demanding training and competition schedule. ●

Michael Jackson

Divisional Director, Savills Project Management,
Master of Engineering
(Civil and Building Engineering), 1995,
Graduate Diploma in Building Project
Management, 1993

OUTSTANDING STUDENT FINALISTS

Emma Buis

Bachelor of Engineering (Architectural
Engineering), 2008–current

Deepa Chand

Bachelor of Laws/Bachelor of Business
(Accounting), 2010–current

German Antonio Osuna Sorensen

Bachelor of Engineering (Mechanical
Engineering), 2008–current



Melbourne's western region is experiencing a huge demand for trade skills to meet the needs of a population boom.

TRADE BOOM

BY ANN MARIE ANGEBRANDT

Melbourne's west has been identified as the fastest growing region in Australia with projections that it will accommodate more than one-quarter of Melbourne's expected growth over the next 25 years.

A big driver of this growth is the relatively affordable new housing now transforming the once-rural areas around Melton, Werribee and Wyndhamvale, which attract nearly 20,000 new residents a year. With such explosive growth, tradesmen of all kinds are more in demand in Melbourne's west than ever before.

Brickies in red-hot demand

Bricklayers are now in such hot demand for the west's booming construction industry that students learning the trade are almost guaranteed work once they complete a short pre-apprenticeship course.

Victoria University bricklaying teacher Lionel Skinner says one of the world's most ancient trades is now facing a critical shortage of newcomers, and that will only get worse. "Of the 29,000 bricklayers in Australia, nearly half of them are

aged over 50,” Skinner says. “The number of students we are training are not matching the number of tradesmen retiring and leaving the industry.”

To help address the problem, VU’s bricklaying pre-apprenticeship is attracting a new group of students – migrants and refugees from Burma and Africa. They are proving to be talented and committed workers.

Sunshine resident Sui Andri, 34, was forced to flee his homeland in Burma and his job in a rubber factory more than 10 years ago. Although he was the oldest member of his VU pre-apprenticeship class, Sui says the course has given him new skills and a good start to his new life in Australia.

VU’s pre-apprenticeship bricklaying program is the only course of its kind in Melbourne’s west, and is offered at its Newport, Werribee and Melton campuses. Up to 15 students are taught full time in two eight-week semesters, earning a Certificate I and II in Bricklaying.

Students can then work as an apprentice with an employer for a further two and a half years before they are fully qualified bricklayers.

“After 16 weeks with us, they learn everything from basic first-aid to masonry blockwork, and they would be a confident asset to any employer,” Skinner says.

State-wide and student built

Victoria University vocational students are building portable timber homes for customers who haul them to every corner of the state as granny flats, beach homes and starter houses.

Aspiring carpenters build around a dozen of the modular houses each year at VU’s Newport, Melton and Werribee campuses. They are strictly supervised over the 11 weeks it takes to complete the industry-approved homes, which contain up to three bedrooms, a bathroom and kitchen, and a lounge room with a cathedral ceiling.



Orders are growing as word spreads, and there’s now a lengthy waiting list ... The homes are constructed with sustainable timbers and designed with 6-star-rating energy efficiency.

The take-away homes have been delivered state-wide from suburban blocks in Taylors Lakes to beachside properties in Venus Bay. Orders are growing as word spreads, and there's now a lengthy waiting list.

The project has been part of VU's carpentry program for 15 years, and is now a major assignment for pre-apprentices. More recently, plastering, painting and building design students have also been involved.

Construction Industries Live Works manager David Delahunty says VU is among the state's only training organisations to offer carpentry students opportunities to work on real homes rather than models.

"The students are very precise because they know this will be used by paying clients," Delahunty says. "They are extremely proud and protective of their work since this is the first time they've done something this big from start to finish."

The homes are built at-cost, with clients paying about \$700 a square metre compared with the \$900 charged by commercial builders. However, the focus of VU's program is solely on student learning, not profit-making, Delahunty says.

"We're not competing with professional builders even though the job we do is still signed off by external inspectors and includes the same warranties as a commercial job," he says.

The homes are constructed with sustainable timbers and designed with 6-star-rating energy efficiency.

For more information about VU's student-built transportable homes, contact David Delahunty on 0435 657 569



Bricklayers are now in such hot demand for the west's booming construction industry that students learning the trade are almost guaranteed work once they complete a short pre-apprenticeship course.



OO VU'S ASPIRING CARPENTERS: STUDENT-BUILT TRANSPORTABLE HOMES ARE BEING MOVED TO ALL PARTS OF THE STATE AS GRANNY FLATS AND BEACH HOMES.

Virtual tradies

Victoria University trade students are using virtual worlds to learn about building site set-up and safety in trial projects that could revolutionise the future of trade teaching.

Researchers Stefan Schutt and Dale Linegar of the University's Work-based Education Research Centre are behind the immersive 3-D technologies that VU trade students now use to complete units such as those covering Occupational Health and Safety and building regulations.

"Instead of reading about safety, students identify a wheelbarrow stacked high with bricks within a 3-D building site, and then answer multiple choice questions that test their knowledge," Schutt says.

"It creates new possibilities for exploring unsafe work environments – something that obviously can't be done in real life."

Students are assessed through an electronic learning management system without the teachers needing to be virtual world experts themselves.

The students can plug their virtual worlds into their home computer on a USB data stick to practise activities on the internet outside school hours to learn at their own pace. They toggle between the virtual world and traditional paper-based materials to get as close to a real-world experience as possible.

The technology has proved so popular that pre-apprentices opt to work on their tasks through lunch breaks and smokos, Schutt says.

"Virtual worlds offer significant potential to be expanded into others areas as forms of training that are visual, immersive and highly engaging," he says.

Young women defy stereotype

Four female students in a Victoria University carpentry course are challenging the stereotype that the only nails women are interested in are on their fingers.

The four trainee chippies make up one-quarter of a Newport Campus pre-apprenticeship class – the highest proportion of women the University has ever had in a single carpentry program.

Teacher Anthony Sims says the young women are proving they can design, saw, build, and hammer as well as their male classmates – and give back as much as they get to anyone who jokes about their ability. The four students – Charlie Agius, 21 of St Albans; Daniela Lopez, 19 of Seddon; Sophie Tamarangi, 17 of Werribee; and Billi Johnstone, 17 of Kealba – say they have each harboured a long-held desire to become a builder.

Charlie says that after a few years of retail work following secondary school, she decided this year to follow many of her relatives into a trade.

“I’m not a traditional type of person, so becoming a carpenter makes sense since I’ve always been better working with my hands,” Charlie says.

Daniela, who migrated to Australia from Columbia three years ago, says her family are still a little surprised at her career choice, given that it’s seen as an unappealing job done by unskilled labour in her homeland.

“They discouraged me, but I have convinced them that this is what I love to do and I can do very well with it in Australia,” Daniela says. “I’ve never visualised myself going to university and I’m now looking for an apprenticeship.”

Sophie says she has always got along well with her male classmates, and will have no trouble fitting into a traditionally male workplace.

“I was surprised to find other girls in the class, but it wouldn’t have bothered me if they weren’t there,” Sophie says.



Women are proving they can design, saw, build and hammer as well as their male classmates.

Billi says she is happier now that she is following her grandfather's trade instead of doing the hospitality training she was steered into after she left school at Year 10. ●

○ CHARLIE AGIUS, SOPHIE TAMARANGI, BILLI JOHNSTONE AND DANIELA LOPEZ –
CHALLENGING THE STEREOTYPE OF THE
MALE-DOMINATED CARPENTER TRADE.





Training made to measure

BY ANN MARIE ANGEBRANDT

PREVIOUS PAGE: A 13-WEEK SENIOR STATION OFFICER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM PROVIDES FIRE OFFICERS WITH THE NECESSARY KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS TO BE PROMOTED TO STATION MANAGER.

Students are traditionally defined as young people embarking on an early career, but at Victoria University, students come in all ages and from all walks of life.

An increasing proportion of VU students are in fact already in the workforce, employed in large or small organisations who want to improve their staff's skills through customised training.

VU's workplace training has spanned a variety of industry sectors over the years, in workplaces ranging from the Australian Bureau of Statistics to Zoos Victoria.

Among current employees taking advantage of VU's workplace skills training are Williamstown shipbuilders seeking to improve their literacy and numeracy, local city council workers upgrading their management expertise and Melbourne fire fighters learning leadership skills.

In 2010, VU delivered almost two million student contact hours of workplace training across a range of training modes, including in VU classrooms, on-the-job, online, or in a customised combination of these.

Executive Dean of VU's Faculty of Workforce Development Grant Dreher says VU's workplace training is a response to industry and government demand for higher skills and higher-level qualifications.

"Our customised training can help an organisation assess gaps in its existing workforce skills, identify opportunities for productivity gains, and add new skills and a sense of staff empowerment," says Dreher.

Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) Leadership and Development Manager Tony Westcott says a 13-week senior station officer development program designed with VU provides station officers with the necessary attributes, knowledge and skills to be promoted to station manager.

The program was mapped to VU's Diploma in Business and partly aligned to the Australian National Training Framework, enabling participants to gain a fire-fighting management diploma. The program recently won a VU Vice-Chancellor's Award for outstanding industry engagement.

"The program involved a strong collaborative relationship and cultural fit between VU and the MFB, and provided innovative customised training to meet the changing needs of the MFB's 21st century workforce," says Westcott.

Wyndham City Council was among Melbourne's first local government councils to offer Certificate IV qualifications in local government to its staff. Through VU's Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) process, long-time employees with few formal qualifications had on-the-job assessment projects incorporated into their current roles while receiving credit for the expertise they had developed over the years.

Meanwhile, Robyn Armstrong, personal assistant to the Council's organisational development manager, says she became increasingly aware of a need to develop her skills if she wanted a meaningful career at the Council, after starting there several decades earlier as a 16-year-old casual.

"When I was given the opportunity to do the certificate, I thought I was long past going to school," says Armstrong. "But I've blossomed personally and

In 2010, VU delivered almost two million contact hours of workplace training.

professionally because of my studies, and am now much more confident in my work.”

City West Water earned first place in the Victorian Government’s Minister’s Award for Excellence for its technical officer development program, created in partnership with VU as a five-year accelerated cadetship. The program includes on-the-job rotations and internal training delivered through Certificate III business courses, as well as a VU Diploma of Engineering Technology, with options for further study. City West’s Organisational Development Manager Sophie Sigalas says that until this program, there had been no accredited training for water technical officers in Australia since 1995.

“Working with VU, we conducted a skills recognition program, then developed tailor-made training that’s helping us address succession planning and knowledge management,” says Sigalas. ●



THE NEW \$8.3 MILLION LEARNING COMMONS
AT FOOTSCRAY NICHOLSON CAMPUS.

TRADING SPACES

BY KAMINI RAJARETHNAM

Footscray Nicholson Campus is home to Victoria University's fifth Learning Commons, the name given to a conglomeration of educational services that herald a new culture of learning.

A library is usually regarded as a sacred space for research, creation and reflection, free from distraction and noise. But gone are the days of the shushing librarian at the Footscray Nicholson Campus Library, the centrepiece of the University's new \$8.3 million Learning Commons in the Telford Building.

Designed by the internationally renowned Cox Architects – whose work includes the landmark township of Yulara at Uluru – the striking two-level building brings a breath of fresh air to learning by bringing together an array of learning support services in the one place.

As you enter the Telford Building, a dramatic central laneway leads you to a café, and then the Careers and Student Engagement office, while a larger-than-life round table in the foyer provides the perfect meeting spot. Upstairs, students work in pairs and groups in booths, while others sit at computers scattered across the entire floor.

LEARNING COMMONS AT VICTORIA UNIVERSITY

CITY FLINDERS 2006

ST ALBANS 2007

WERRIBEE 2007

FOOTSCRAY PARK 2011

FOOTSCRAY NICHOLSON 2011



**One would never
have dreamt of such a
revolutionary concept
– life on campus will
change.**

Garry Potter, who manages the University's 10 libraries across all campuses, believes the new space provides students with a more informal, dynamic environment that will maximise their learning experience on campus.

"When I first began working at the University 15 years ago, one would never have dreamt of such a revolutionary concept," Potter says. "Life on campus will change because of the new Learning Commons."

Like the new Footscray Park Learning Commons, which opened last February, Footscray Nicholson's dynamic new learning hub is providing a one-stop shop for Library, student support services, café facilities, spaces for collaborative and interactive student work, and access to information and technology services.

Little wonder that the contemporary interior design married with hip study spaces such as the café-style booths, discussion rooms, walkways that link different areas, WiFi connectivity and twice the number of computers available to students has meant the new space is rapidly gaining popularity and become the focal point of the campus.

Recognising the need for both individual and social dimensions to study, there is a dedicated 'Quiet Room' for those looking for a more traditional library experience along with the busy, lively social spaces where discussion and chatting is permitted.

Student Brodie Ferrif finds the Quiet Room essential to her studying needs because it allows her to focus without distractions.

"The Learning Commons is flexible for either group or individual study, and I am able to work on my assignments using the computers in the Quiet Room," she says.

Students of the Library/Information Services course attend classes at the Training Lab, which is also used by Student Support Services and the Library to run study skills workshops.



STUDENT ENGAGEMENT





SNAPSHOT OF THE FOOTSCRAY NICHOLSON LEARNING COMMONS

OPENING DATE: JULY 2011

ARCHITECTS: COX
ARCHITECTS

SIZE: 2400M2 (APPROX)

PROJECT COST: \$8.3 MILLION

STUDENT NUMBERS ON
CAMPUS: 2500 (2011
ESTIMATE)

LEARNING SPACES: 310

STUDENT COLLABORATIVE
STUDY ROOMS: 6

STUDENT COMPUTERS: 151

SERVICES: LIBRARY, CAREERS,
IT, LEARNING SUPPORT,
STUDENT ROVERS, STUDENT
COUNSELLING, CAFETERIA

Student Engagement together with Careers and Concurrent Assistance, work with the Library to provide assistance with language, literacy and maths skills, as well as career advice, student welfare and counselling. Five Student Rovers, two student assistants and two peer career advisers are employed as part of VU's Learning in the Workplace and Community program to assist students.

The Terrain is a vibrant education space designed to support the changing styles of teaching and learning. Cox Architects were given free rein to transform the former amphitheatre into a unique learning space featuring segmented areas on multi-levels for large group lectures and activities.

The Liberal Arts Club Secretary and Treasurer, student Leah Cribbin says the Learning Commons has played a fundamental part for the club as members now use the Terrain as a regular space to catch up and socialise. The discussion rooms, WiFi connectivity and accessible power points for laptops have allowed others to form study groups and complete group assignments.

Potter says the new space has reinvigorated campus life at Footscray Nicholson and students are enjoying the relaxed and informal environment inside the Telford Building.

"The Learning Commons was a great opportunity to revisit the services and facilities on campus and is confirmation of the University's commitment to give students a unique experience," says Potter. "I couldn't be prouder." ●

BELOW: MU SEY NAY'S EXTENDED FAMILY MEET EVERY SUNDAY TO WORSHIP AT A SMALL BAPTIST CHURCH IN SUNSHINE. MU SEY NAY IS IN THE SECOND ROW, THIRD FROM THE RIGHT.



All in the family

BY ANN MARIE ANGEBRANDT

Burmese refugee Mu Sey Nay is one of the first English language students at Victoria University to earn a Medal of Excellence for her outstanding commitment to learning the language of her new home.

Mu Sey Nay, 22, has a story that goes far beyond hard work in the classroom. As part of an enormous extended family belonging to Burma's Karen ethnic minority, the Nay family began arriving in Melbourne four years ago after they spent decades in a refugee camp on the Thai–Burma border. Its branches have now spread through Victoria, but mainly in Melbourne's western suburb of Sunshine. As a first step in their new lives, many in the family have studied at Victoria University.

DeMu Sey was born in the refugee camp, and never knew her mother who died from kidney failure when she was a baby. She grew up there with two sisters and five half-brothers, attending a basic school run by Christian missionaries and dreaming of a life outside the camp. Her marriage at age 17 to Kyaw Htoo, a shy boy she met at school, is one of her happiest camp memories.

But when 20 family members were given the green light in 2007 to come to Australia, Mu Sey's husband wasn't included on the list since the resettlement



OO MU SEY NAY: "I LEARNED ENGLISH QUICKLY BECAUSE I WANT TO ENJOY THE GOOD OPPORTUNITIES IN AUSTRALIA."

application had been lodged years earlier and before they had married. She farewelled her extended family as they left for Australia, and waited a further two years with her husband and a young baby before she was able to join them.

Like many of her relatives, Mu Sey and her husband enrolled in VU's Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) once she arrived in Melbourne. She learned English from teacher Mary Dearing, the same person who had taught her father, Eh Thoo Kler, her sister Ba Htoo Ra, her uncles, Tino and Kaw Naw Po, her aunt War War Khaing, and sister-in-law Kler Htoo. Dozens of other relatives had also learned English at the same Sunshine Campus from other AMEP teachers.

And many have continued their studies. Mu Sey's husband, Kyaw Htoo, trained as a bricklayer. Her sister, May May is studying nursing. Her aunt, Dah Eh is studying community development. Several others have completed adult VCE. Mu Sey's own goal is to become a nurse or a teacher once her two young children are older.

"I learned English quickly because I want to enjoy the good opportunities in Australia," Mu Sey says. "Every day I would visit my neighbours if I couldn't understand my homework."

Dearing says Mu Sey's family have all been wonderful students, a delight to teach and "have taught me more than I taught them about enjoying the simpler things in life".

The family is remembered with much fondness by VU's AMEP staff, not only for their commitment to forging a better life in Australia, but also for their love of music and singing.

In recent years, several Australian-born children have further enlarged the sizeable family, but its members remain incredibly close, meeting every Sunday to worship at a small Baptist church in Sunshine. ●

MIGRANT SERVICES AT VU

The AMEP is the Australian Government's major settlement program, and provides up to 510 hours of free English language training to new arrivals.

VU began offering the program in 2002, and now delivers it through VU College at its Sunshine, Werribee and Melton Campuses. Morning, afternoon and evening classes are available and free childcare is offered to eligible students, depending on availability.

Successful AMEP completion can lead directly into Victoria University certificates in a variety of areas including nursing, interpreting and translating, aged-care studies, youth studies, pre-apprenticeships, traineeships, Preparation for the Occupational English Test, and adult VCE.

The University also offers non-AMEP English as a Second Language (ESL) at its Footscray, Nicholson, City Flinders and St Albans Campuses.

For more information about VU's AMEP English program phone (03) 9919 8107 or email amep@vu.edu.au

○ MU SEY NAY AND HER BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN A REFUGEE CAMP ON THE THAI-BURMA BORDER IN 2004.



A FIRST IN CHILD CARE



BY KAMINI RAJARETHNAM

PREVIOUS PAGE: CHLOE RYAN AT VU'S
NEWPORT CHILDREN'S CENTRE

Victoria University's Yanneit Employment Strategy aims to improve the educational and employment opportunities of Indigenous Australians. The strategy includes a program that trains students for a career in child care.

Squeals of laughter fill the air as children run from sandpit to monkey bar. Chloe Ryan stands among them, watching, making sure her young charges don't hurt themselves, and ready to calm any disputes between the tiny toddlers. For the past two years, the 24 year old has worked as a trainee at VU's Newport Children's Centre, where she is currently studying a Diploma of Children's Services.

The Diploma is part of VU's Indigenous Childcare Traineeship Program. The opportunity to enrol in the program came through a chance meeting at an Indigenous community centre in Maribyrnong in Melbourne's inner west.

Colleen Marion, CEO of the Western Suburbs Indigenous Gathering Place Association (WSIGPA) approached Ryan with the suggestion to apply for a traineeship. Ryan was subsequently offered a 12-month traineeship as a child



care worker based at the Newport Children's Centre. In 2010 Chloe graduated as the first Indigenous trainee to obtain a VU Certificate III in Children's Services.

"I hope to become a positive example for other Indigenous Australians to get up and do something too," says Ryan.

"I always had an interest in children's welfare and this traineeship provided the perfect opportunity for me to develop the skills needed to gain employment in an area I was passionate about." Now studying the Diploma of Children's Services, Ryan is well on her way to a career in children's services.

Newport Children's Centre Co-ordinator Denise McDonald praises Ryan's hard work, commitment and enthusiasm. "She has taught us so much about Indigenous culture," says McDonald. "Her background has been a fantastic resource in educating everyone about the correct ways of promoting Indigenous culture. She has certainly enriched the culture of our centre."

When Ryan graduates with her Diploma, she plans to enrol in the Bachelor of Education to pursue her dream of becoming a primary school teacher. The Indigenous Childcare Traineeship was established in 2009 under the University's Yarroneit Employment Strategy (YES) to meet the need for qualified Indigenous childcare workers, as recognised by government initiatives aimed at improving the outcomes for early childhood education and care in the Indigenous community.

Trainees graduate with a Certificate III in Children's Services and can choose to pathway to a Diploma of Children's Services, equipping them to follow many career paths.

Each year, VU aims to enrol one new Indigenous Australian trainee at each of the University's four childcare centres – at Newport, Werribee, Footscray Park and Footscray Nicholson Campuses. ●



**I HOPE TO BECOME
A POSITIVE
EXAMPLE
FOR OTHER
INDIGENOUS
AUSTRALIANS.**

THE YANNONEIT EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY (YES)

OPENING DOORS TO INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

Eight years ago Victoria University made a commitment to undertake measures aimed at improving the lives of Indigenous people, through improved study opportunities and the recruitment of Indigenous staff. Indigenous Employment Co-ordinator Marlon Booth joined the University as its inaugural Indigenous Employment Co-ordinator two years later, setting up the University's 2005 Indigenous Employment and Career Development Strategy to improve VU's relationship with the local Indigenous community.

The strategy was renamed 'Yannoneit' in 2006 to honour the local Wurundjeri people and help keep alive the Woiwurrung language.

By using the word 'Yannoneit' – meaning 'to walk' or 'come walk' – VU is symbolically inviting Indigenous Australians to take part in its mission to transform the lives of individuals through the power of education.

The Yannoneit strategy has 16 key recommendations,

The Moondani Balluk Academic Unit was established at St Albans Campus in 2006 as part of the Faculty of Arts, Education and Human Development to provide the Indigenous community with better educational opportunities as well as better support when studying at VU.

Meaning 'embrace people' in the Wurundjeri language, Moondani Balluk not only encourages Indigenous Australians to apply for its programs but also provides a nurturing environment for Indigenous Australians to share and gain knowledge about their culture and community. Moondani Balluk offers a Bachelor of Arts (Kyinandoo) as well as Certificates I, II and III in Mumgu-Dhal Tyama-Tiyi that provide pathways to the Kyinandoo degree. Kyinandoo means 'clever' in Wurundjeri, and Mumgu-Dhal Tyama-Tiyi means 'message stick of knowledge'.

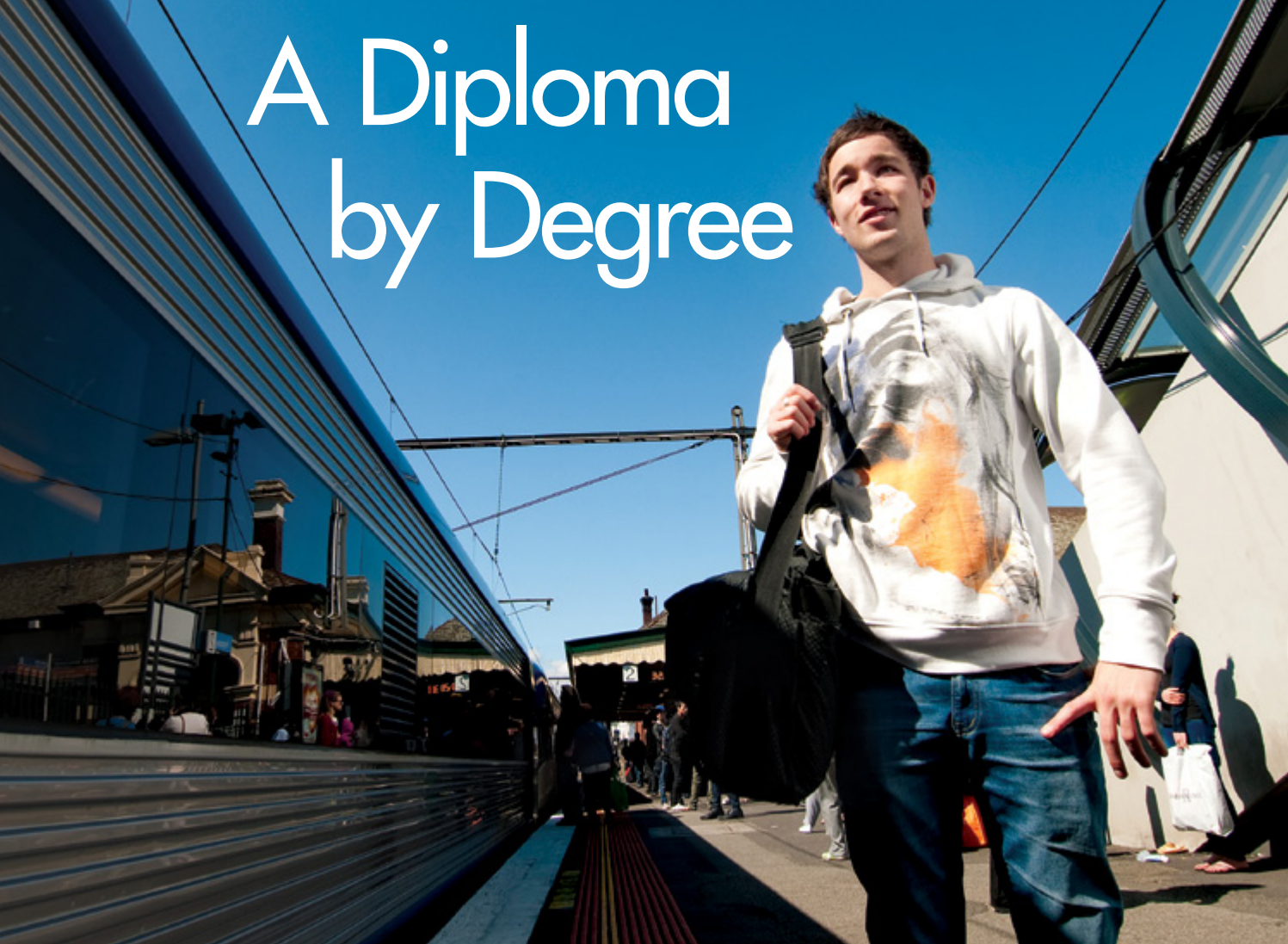
The Kyinandoo degree is the only course in Victoria that encourages students to work with or for Indigenous communities and groups as part of the curriculum.

including increasing the number of Indigenous employees at VU to two per cent of all staff by the end of 2013. This figure represents the percentage of Indigenous Australians within the broader community. Almost 30 Indigenous staff are now employed across VU, and Booth is optimistic the University will achieve its aim of having two per cent Indigenous staff – numbering 49 – by 2013.

VU also offers Indigenous Australians scholarships to cover education and accommodation costs, as well as Commonwealth Government Indigenous Access Scholarships and the biannual Soroptimist Indigenous Female Scholarship.

Contact the Moondani Balluk Academic Unit by phoning (03) 9919 2370 (reverse charge calls accepted) or by email: Moondani.Balluk@vu.edu.au

A Diploma by Degree



BY ANN MARIE ANGEBRANDT

PREVIOUS PAGE: TOM DAVY SPENDS 16 HOURS A WEEK ON TRAINS SO HE CAN STUDY VICTORIA UNIVERSITY'S FIRST DIPLOMA-INTO-DEGREE COURSE.

Tom Davy doesn't mind the four-hour return train trip he takes from his home in the Latrobe Valley to get to uni.

For the 19-year-old student, the four-day-a-week commute is worth it to study Victoria University's first diploma-into-degree course, launched earlier this year. The new strategy lets students who aren't quite ready for university do their first year in a nurturing TAFE environment before they move seamlessly into a second-year Bachelor's degree.

Tom, an aspiring musician, will soon complete a one-year Diploma of Business (Enterprise) at Footscray Nicholson Campus, which will lead next year into a Bachelor of Business at Footscray Park Campus – and for him, a music industry specialisation.

Tom is one of about a dozen students to pilot the first of VU's diploma-into-degree courses, aimed at students who are under-prepared for university, for whatever reason. They may have missed out on the right ATAR score, lack

DIPLOMA INTO DEGREE

Diploma of Business Enterprise

↳ Bachelor of Business

Diploma of Education Studies

↳ Bachelor of Education (P-12)

Diploma of Information Technology
(Networking)

↳ Bachelor of Information
Technology (Networks
and Computing Systems)

Diploma of Creative Arts Industries

↳ Bachelor of Creative Arts

Diploma of Arts (Community)

↳ Bachelor of Arts
(Community Development)



My score wasn't enough to get me into a degree, but this has been a great start.

certain prerequisites, or perhaps they've been away from study for a while and are daunted by the idea of higher education.

"My score wasn't enough to get me into a degree, but this has been a great start," says Tom. "The smaller classes were better than sitting in huge lecture theatres. Next year, I'll be one hundred per cent ready for a degree because I've built up my knowledge and study techniques."

Students learn the same content as the first year of a degree, but with greater access to teachers, extra help with academic skills, and support to stay on track. With a slightly longer semester and a few extra hours a week more than their degree-taking counterparts, they finish exactly where they should be to begin the second year of their degree.

Even if students stop after the first year, they've completed a diploma that makes them work-ready for an entry-level career.

Teacher Antonietta Muraca, who teaches accounting to the Diploma of Business (Enterprise) students, says she has "absolutely no doubt" her students will be sufficiently prepared to launch into the second year of the degree.

In 2012, the Diploma of Business (Enterprise) will be joined by the Diploma of Education Studies, with pathways into VU's Bachelor of Education (P-12); and the Diploma of Information Technology (Networking) that leads to a Bachelor of Information Technology specialising in networks and computing systems.

Also offered next year will be the Diploma of Creative Industries (with specialisations in digital media, music, performance studies, creative writing and visual arts), that will take graduates to a Bachelor of Creative Arts Industries; and the Diploma of Arts (Community) that leads to a Bachelor of Arts specialising in community development. ●



Kirby Honoured

Retired High Court judge Michael Kirby was conferred with an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Victoria University in October.

His distinguished career included inaugural chair of the Australian Law Reform Commission and membership on many international bodies as a human rights advocate.

Mr Kirby said at his conferral that he always stood out as “a joiner, a stirrer and a shaker”.

He said Australian society still suffered from injustices and that they must not remain uncured for decades as they did when he graduated as a lawyer in 1962. He said at that time, few if any of his graduating class saw any injustice in the treatment of Indigenous people, Asian immigrants, women, gays or prisoners.

“Today we must be more critical, questioning and insightful,” he said.

“We must look into the essence of things and measure ourselves against the standards of universal

human rights enshrined in international law.”

Since retiring, Mr Kirby has continued to be active in international human rights. He has also been a strong supporter of VU’s Victoria Law School and wrote the foundation article for the law school’s new journal *Dictum* last month.



Service fees back

VU welcomed the reintroduction of compulsory services fees for university students to fund non-academic services. A new law was introduced by Federal Parliament in October, and it will allow VU to better fund student services and facilities from 2012, such as student clubs and societies, union representation, and subsidise child care and sport and fitness activities.

From first semester 2012 full-time higher education students will be charged \$125 per semester and part-time students \$62.50. Students may choose to defer payment under the HECS scheme. Fees for TAFE students are not yet finalised, but students who have a Health Care Card will be charged a lower fee.

Good Hair Day

Victoria University's hairdressers, make-up artists and modelling students proved they are among the best in the state by winning the 2011 International Hairstylists Society (IHS) Battle of the Colleges competition held in August.

Drawing inspiration from the movie *My Fair Lady*, students from VU's Personal Services programs created a themed collection of hair and fashion to beat out six rival colleges from across Melbourne.

The students prepared for the competition at VU's City King Campus before competing at The Palms, Crown Casino.

Hairdressing teacher Antonelle Lindrea, who has been artistic director of VU's entrants in the annual IHS Battle of the Colleges for the past three years, says the contest was an exciting forum for students to assess their own performance against their peers.

The End of Unis?

The university's traditional role as creator, curator and distributor of knowledge is under direct threat from the internet. This was the claim made by Vice-Chancellor's Fellow Lindsay Tanner in his Chancellor's lecture, 'Will the Internet Kill Universities?' held at Victoria University in October.

Tanner said the digital revolution is transforming almost every aspect of human existence, and that universities are struggling to adapt to the dynamics of the new world – if they don't they will die.



He said when information technologies change, even the most entrenched institutions can be overturned. He cited the invention of printing in the 15th century enabled mass circulation of subversive doctrines that challenged traditional authority and hierarchy and led to the Reformation.

He said e-learning has come a long way beyond mere replication of physical content in the digital world. Recent digital innovations, loosely grouped under the Web 2.0 label, are unleashing possibilities of interactivity, collaboration and creativity that were previously unimaginable.

But Tanner said if e-learning means more inquiry-based, self-directed and peer-based learning based on collaboration and interactivity, universities have not progressed very far. He said if they don't set about changing now, there may not be any universities at all.

Lindsay Tanner was a Finance minister in the Federal Labor Government. To view a full transcript of his lecture,

visit www.vu.edu.au/news

Weird science

Combustion reactions rocked school assembly halls from Hume to Heathcote one week in October when Victoria University's Professor Science Troupe went on the road.

The travelling stage show presented 20 science demonstrations, full of big bangs and wonderment, designed to engage students in science and the art of discovery. Troupe co-ordinator Nick Athanasiou says the show washes away preconceptions of

'dull' science.

"This is raw science where all rules are broken," he says. The stage show is presented free to primary and secondary schools and is a VU outreach initiative run by Foundation Studies and Community Science students. The show started seven years ago but has only been touring beyond Melbourne's western suburbs for the past three years.

Contact: Nick Athanasiou on (03) 9919 4233 or email Nick.Athanasiou@vu.edu.au



New Science Centre

Victoria University has strengthened its commitment to educating budding scientists in Melbourne's west with a \$100,000 equipment donation made in partnership with Shimadzu Scientific Instruments to Hoppers Crossing Secondary College's new Science Centre.

The Science Centre was opened in July by Prime Minister Julia Gillard under the Federal Government's Building Education Revolution Fund. The \$2 million Centre features state-of-the-art instruments and equipment to inspire and challenge students in science-based subjects. It will be used by schools across Melbourne's west with a science curriculum centred on forensics, water conservation, food

technology and nano-technology.

VU's School of Engineering and Science sponsored three key pieces of equipment: an atomic absorption spectrophotometer to analyse metals; a liquid chromatograph for separating and analysing chemical compounds; and an ultraviolet-visible spectrophotometer to analyse samples using light absorption techniques.

VU will support the centre further by devising experiments to support curriculum, and placing VU science and teaching students in learning-in-the-workplace roles at the centre. VU opened its own \$1 million science lab at its Werribee Campus in 2008 in partnership with Shimadzu.

MBA makes top 10

VU's MBA made the Aussie top ten in the Financial Review's 2011 BOSS ranking. Of the 21 participating universities, VU ranked 6th.

and research output.

VU's MBA research performance ranked third, with research being particularly strong in Business Management, Information Systems, Tourism, Education



The Financial Review ranks Australian MBA programs every two years. The rankings are based on an alumni survey (worth 55%) focusing on course satisfaction, professional improvement and the MBA's value for money.

The remaining 45% of the survey is based on a university's MBA accreditation, entry requirements and quality of staff – with an emphasis on academic qualifications, current business experience

and Applied Economics.

VU's MBA offers flexibility in course entry and exit options, such as at Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma levels, as well as the MBA. Students can also choose from over 50 elective units to tailor their MBA to their own needs.

The full results of the MBA survey were published in the September issue of Financial Review BOSS.

Giving back

More than 300 Victoria University students and staff volunteered their time and skills in dozens of community projects around Footscray in October in the University's first annual Volunteer for You (V4U) Day. Fuelled by an early morning breakfast at Footscray Park Campus, the volunteers set out in teams to tackle 47 projects including rejuvenating community gardens, building new fences at aged care homes, organising donations at local opportunity shops and food banks, socialising with local at-risk youth and homeless men, and restoring run-down facilities at neighbourhood houses.

The student volunteers came from all campuses and across a range of courses including trades, business, event management, health, hospitality and education.

V4U project leader and Bachelor of Business (Events and Hospitality) student Kristi Sudholz says the project was an opportunity for VU volunteers to give back to the community for its support of the University.

"The event aims to build a stronger relationship between students, the local community and the University," says Sudholz.



New books



Selling Sex Short

By Meagan Tyler

Cambridge Scholars Publishing
Hardcover, 250 pages
\$59.99

This is the first book to fully investigate the connections between pornography and sexology, which are redefining sexuality in the West. With the increasing pornification of popular culture and reports of an epidemic of female sexual dysfunction, the author uses a feminist critique of current trends in pornography and sexological research to reveal the influence of pornography and sexology on our lives.



Tourists, Tourism and the Good Life

By Philip Pearce,
Sebastian Filep,
Glenn Ross

Routledge
Hardcover, 242 pages
\$125

Tourism is arguably one of the largest self-initiated commercial interventions to create wellbeing and happiness on the planet. Yet there is a lack of attention to the ways in which we can better understand and evaluate the relationship between wellbeing and travel.

This book discusses topics such as the issue of excess materialism and its fragile relationship with wellbeing.



Spiare e Tradire: Dietro le Quinte della Guerra Fredda

[Espionage and Betrayal: Behind
the Scenes of the Cold War]

By Phillip Deery and
Mario Del Pero

Feltrinelli Press (Milan)
Paperback, 256 pages
\$23 (Italian language)

This book examines how the Soviet Union sought and trained espionage agents in Australia, Great Britain and the United States during the Cold War, and the spies' activities, motivations and weaknesses. It also reflects on the dichotomy that of espionage – it was either done for ideology or money – pointing out that personal bonds, love and idealism were also influential.



Offset

By various authors

Offset Press

Softcover, 139 pages

\$20.00 (Sun Bookstore,
Yarraville)

Offset is an annual journal of poetry, art and short stories from Victoria University third-year professional writing students and other emerging writers from across Australia. Now in its 11th year, the publication provides industry experience for Offset's editors and designers, and a public forum for the 34 writers and poets, and 12 artists whose work is featured this year.



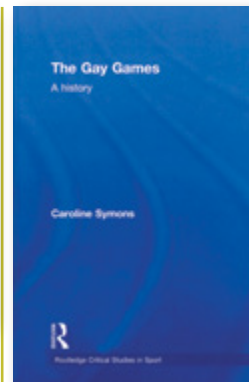
Wild About You! The Sixties Beat Explosion in Australia and New Zealand

By Ian D. Marks and
Iain McIntyre

Verse Chorus Press

Paperback, 352 pages
\$34.95

From pop icons to underground legends, this book has them all. There are chapters on 35 of the bands who made the scene, along with the authors' list of the top 100 Beat and garage songs of the period. Profusely illustrated with 400 photographs and a detailed discography, *Wild About You!* is the definitive account of a unique time in rock history.



The Gay Games: A History

By Caroline Symons

Routledge

Paperback, 302 pages
\$42.95

Since their inception in 1980, the Gay Games have developed into a multi-million dollar mega-event, engaging people from all continents. This book explores the significance of the Games in the context of broader gay and lesbian history, and addresses a range of contemporary themes within sports studies, including the cultural politics of sport and the politics of difference and identity.

Talking point

In the first of a regular column by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Peter Dawkins reflects on the power of education.



In October, I enjoyed attending five graduation ceremonies, wonderful occasions at which we celebrate the success of our graduates, and at which the University community has a chance to pay tribute to not only those who are achieving academically, but to those who have inspired us.

We heard great speeches by five Valedictorians, who spoke on behalf of the graduates. They were: Mr Nussen Ainsworth Bachelor of Laws; Ms Alison Whan Bachelor of Arts; Ms Anita Milicevic Doctor of Philosophy; Mr Justin Rhodes Bachelor of Engineering (Mechanical Engineering); and Mr Keith Matthews Bachelor of Business, Accounting, Banking, Finance.

We were also privileged to hear from inspirational guest speakers, The Honourable Michael Kirby AC CMG, Mr Simon Garlick Chief Executive Officer Western Bulldogs; Professor Roger Slee Director Institute of Diversity; Educational Access and Success, Ms Natalie O'Brien Chief Executive Officer Melbourne Food & Wine; and Mr Ken Loughnan AO.

One of the common themes which stood out for me throughout each of the speeches was the power of education. Additionally, there was a focus on encouraging graduates to make a difference to the world. This encouragement to 'make a difference to the world' is reinforced both by the 'charge to the graduates', which I as Vice-Chancellor read out towards the

end of the ceremony, and as part of the Victoria University vision, which aims to ensure we are an excellent, engaged and accessible University, while empowering a diverse community of students to grow their capabilities and transform their lives.

Human rights champion and former high court judge, The Honourable Michael Kirby received an honorary doctorate, and observed it is important for the graduates to stand up for social justice.

I encourage you to access a couple of these excellent speeches on YouTube. By way of example, there were two given at the ceremony on the afternoon of Wednesday 12 October. The first was by our own Professor Roger Slee, Director of the Institute of Diversity, Educational Access and Success, who spoke about the value of education and the metrics that can be applied to measuring the investment in education. Professor Slee noted that those metrics were not just financial, but contextual. "The value of education ... is most apparent when you don't have access to it." You can read more about the value of education by watching Professor Slee's speech here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IhdRumONwX4>

The second speech was by Dr Anita Milicevic who was awarded a PhD at the ceremony. Seven years ago she arrived as a refugee from Croatia with no English language and a

young family. Since that time she has undertaken a Bachelors Degree, an Honours Degree and now a PhD at Victoria University. This was an extraordinary speech about the life experience of a refugee and the transformational effect of education.

Dr Milicevic also acknowledged the importance of peers in the journey of life and learning, and those "whose intellect, love and kindness have nurtured my passion, courage and persistence in my work". Furthermore, she mentioned the "integrity, respect and transparency in personal and collaborative action" as values she came to respect and recognise at Victoria University, as well as the pursuit of excellence in everything its staff do.

Alongside those admirable qualities, Dr Milicevic cites compassion as a fundamental concept that she "believes should always be at the very foundation of academic excellence as well as life experiences, indeed it is in the very foundation of life and existence". I highly recommend you spend some time listening to this inspiring speech by visiting: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dwkrZpxhTDs>

Listening to the valedictorians' speeches is a good way of understanding a little bit more about the power of education.

VU facts

Enrolled students

Total student population:
48,908

Higher
education: 20,948

TAFE: 27,960

Course enrolments

Total course
enrolments: 57,591

Higher education
undergraduate: 52,360

Higher education
postgraduate: 5231

Apprenticeships
and traineeships: 2560

International
total: 13,858

International
offshore: 9375

International
onshore: 4483

Awards presented

Total awards: 14,336

Higher
education: 5525

TAFE: 8811

Doctorates: 81

Scholarships

VU-funded Equity
Scholarships

Total: 462; Value: \$482,000

Staff

Total: 2607

Academics: 641

TAFE teaching: 547

Senior management: 26

General: 1393

Note: Awards presented, Scholarships
and Staff figures represent 2010

Faculties

- Arts, Education and Human Development
- Business and Law
- Health, Engineering and Science
- Technical and Trades Innovation
- VU College
- Workforce Development

Campuses and sites

City Flinders
Newport
City King
Melton
City Queen (site)
St Albans
Footscray Nicholson
Sunshine
Footscray Park
Werribee

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**VICTORIA
UNIVERSITY**

MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA