Are we there yet?

Why we still need International Women’s Day

Veterinary Science & Hospital Open Day

Sunday 16 March 2014, 10am – 3pm

250 Princes Hwy, Werribee

For more information visit

vet.unimelb.edu.au/openday
Inspiring Change

The theme for this year’s International Women’s Day ‘Inspiring Change’, mirrors the University’s research effort, policies and actions when it comes to equality for women.

The University has been inspiring positive change for women since its early years. In 1883 Bella Geurin became the first woman to graduate from a university in Australia, when she graduated from the University of Melbourne. In 1897, while women were still denied the right to vote and had only just been given the right to own land (if they were married), seven women began their medical degrees at the then Melbourne Medical School (MMH), the first women to do so in Australia.

These first female doctors became role models, who in turn inspired change – 1922 graduate Kate Campbell became one of the first female resident medical staff at the Children’s Hospital and the first honorary pediatrician at the Women’s Hospital.

Today, the University is proud to continue this tradition of providing strong women role models, through leaders including Chancellor Alexander and former head of the Australian Research Council and current Provost Professor Margaret Sheil.

Across the University, diverse research projects are being undertaken to better the place of women, dealing with many different problems women still face.

These projects look at the issue through several lenses, depending on the researcher’s area of focus. From the impact of intimate partner violence on women’s health and wellbeing, to in-depth analysis of the knotty problems of equality in the workplace, representations of femininity in art and the place of feminist theory in contemporary society, the University’s body of research in this field is incredibly diverse and involves various research hubs.

The University is a teaching and learning institution as well as a research hub, and as such it strives to inspire change not just through its role models and research programs, but by shaping the next generation of global leaders.

Among its programs to inspire thought and action in equality and diversity are the Diversity and Inclusion Awards, which recognise and reward initiatives that demonstrate innovation and excellence in furthering diversity and social inclusion. These awards help encourage women in disciplines, professions or roles in which they are under-represented to continue to forge new paths for female graduates.

The University is working hard towards the time when we no longer need an International Women’s Day.

Zoe Nikakis,
Acting Editor

From the Editor

Campus life a good fit

This year got off to a flying start for 60 keen VCE students, as the University hosted a three-day camp to increase tertiary study in maths and science disciplines. Kate O’Hara met one eager student with big ambitions.

Tugba Erbasi loves a challenge. For the past few years the Year 12 Roxburgh College student has been setting and achieving new goals, both in her studies and in life outside the school gates.

Her latest personal challenge is one that will require consistent hard work and dedication, but the aspiring engineering student is confident it’s in the bag.

Next year, Ms Erbasi hopes to call herself a University of Melbourne scholar.

She got a taste for university life earlier in January when the University of Melbourne, in partnership with Monash University, the John Monash Science School and Elizabeth Blackburn School of Sciences, hosted a three-day intensive camp for VCE students in maths and science.

Co-ordinated by the University’s Office for Student Equity, the camp is part of the broader Strengthening Engagement and Achievement in Mathematics and Science (SEAMS) initiative funded by the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program, which aims to increase tertiary participation among students from under-represented schools and Indigenous students. Participants stayed at Trinity College and attended a range of classes and activities on campus.

“I was invited to the camp by my careers co-ordinator who had approached me during the last part of 2013,” Ms Erbasi says.

“It was really exciting. It was important for me to take part because this is my final year of high school and I have to make some serious decisions at the end of the year. I absolutely love maths and science, and finding out how these things can be applied to our world.”

Throughout the camp the participating students from around Victoria attended tutorials and lectures designed to strengthen their conceptual understanding of mathematics and science.

Along with meeting new people – and potential future classmates – Ms Erbasi says the opportunity to tour the University helped to answer some concerns.

“Being on campus for three days gave me an idea of how my experience at university might be,” she says.

“The staff members and mentors were absolutely wonderful and very helpful. They were able to pull students out of the little shells where we sometimes hide.

“I also had a chat with one of the staff members about what services and facilities are provided for students. Because I am very devoted to my religion, I was very pleased to learn there are spaces for students to pray and practise their religions.”

http://equity.unimelb.edu.au/
The march to embrace human rights

The modern human rights movement has been built on a bedrock of shame, writes Ryan Sheales.

When a troublesome child is chas-ised for bad behaviour they’re often quick to point the finger at somebody else, as if that other child’s wrongdoing might somehow lessen their own guilt.

New research suggests this very natural ‘Look! Over there!’ impulse, enacted on an international scale in the 1970s, might have squandered enthusiasm for what we now call “human rights”.

Dr Barbara Keys, a senior lecturer in the University of Melbourne’s School of Historical and Philosophical Studies says human rights are today’s moral lingua franca – the universal language in which we couch our aspirations for human betterment.

“They can seem like a timeless truth, it was not until the 1970s that ‘human rights’ became a household term and a global rallying cry,” she says.

Dr Keys’ new book Reclaiming American Virtue: The Human Rights Revolution of the 1970s seeks to identify the impulse at the core of this “new moralism”.

Surprisingly, it locates the roots of the modern human rights movement in Americans’ traumatised psychological state after the Vietnam War.

“It is hard to overstate how deeply unsettling the war was for Americans, whose faith in their country’s benevolence was profoundly shaken by the war’s extraordinary brutality,” she says.

“Martin Luther King Jr. famously called the United States ‘the greatest purveyor of violence in the world’ and many observers around the globe agreed. At home, liberals in particular felt ashamed and guilty.

“The desire to assuage these feelings – not to atone for them but to sublimate them – led liberals to embrace human rights.”

Which brings us back to that naughty young child dobbing in a friend.

Dr Keys argues increasing moves by the US to shine a light on the wrongdoing of other nations may have been less about actually preventing atrocities, and more about creating a distraction from America’s own sense of national shame.

“As I see it, promoting international human rights was not a ‘natural’ response triggered by an epidemic of human rights abuses, or by a cool-headed rethinking of Cold War anti-communism.

“It was really a form of sleight-of-hand, whereby Americans turned the spotlight away from America’s own recent history of violence to focus instead on brutal torture by nasty dictators in places like Chile and South Korea.

“Instead of reckoning with their own guilt, Americans made themselves feel better by pointing the finger at others.”

At the same time, however, another dynamic was at work. Dr Keys uncovers a largely forgotten conservative strand of human rights promotion, one that sowed the seeds for the rise of what human rights similarly derived from a failure to reckon with the true costs of American interventionism in Vietnam.

Indeed, it was the men and women who would do the neoconservative label a few years later who first introduced international human rights into mainstream American political vocabulary in the early 1970s.

“These conservatives found liberal guilt engrossing. They rejected any effort to blame the United States,” Dr Keys notes.

“They grasped human rights as a tool to criticise the Soviet Union, and in particular press for greater levels of Soviet Jewish emigra- tion. Human rights was useful to conservatives because the concept restored moral stature to the United States and placed opprobrium squarely on the Soviet Union – effectively righting the moral balance that had been upset by the Vietnam War.”

Jimmy Carter, when he became president in 1977, made international human rights promo- tion one of the central pillars of U.S. foreign policy. His advisers told him human rights ap- pealed to both liberals and conservatives, and could help heal the psychological damage the war had caused.

But Dr Keys believes Carter failed to reckon with the irreconcilable divergence between liberal and conservative visions of human rights, which prioritised very different rights and were aimed at very different targets.

“Though the new policy was hobbled by unresolved contradictions, including the tension between liberal and conservative visions of what human rights were, Carter gave the new mantra the full backing of a superpower and thereby almost single-handedly ensured the rise of human rights to its current status in the global moral imagination,” Dr Keys says.

Her explanation for the rise of human rights makes the arc of US foreign policy senti- ment since the end of the Vietnam War more understandable.

Meantime, the liberal version of human rights similarly derived from a failure to reckon with the true costs of American interventionism in Vietnam.

The neocons who would plot the invasion of Iraq after the election of George W. Bush had first embraced the moralism of human rights as a rejection of guilt for the Vietnam War.

Human rights made renewed intervention- ism more thinkable, not less – which is why so many liberals could end up supporting Bush’s war for human rights.

Dr Barbara Keys is Senior Lecturer in American and International History. She was the recipient of the 2010 Stuart Bernath Lecture Prize, awarded by the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations.

http://arts.unimelb.edu.au/vce

The march to embrace human rights
The sharing economy

The popularity of the ‘sharing economy’ poses legal challenges. Katherine Lake and Brad Jessup explain the issues.

The sharing economy

The sharing economy often doesn’t fit within these categories. Is a person who spends time tending to a community share garden in return for vegetables an employee? Or is the volunteer protected from negligence actions? What is the extent of their contractual rights and obligations?

This has already given rise to legal tensions in the United States. In the US, services like Lyft, SideCar and Tickengo connect individual private drivers with people who are looking for a lift. But in many US states, these peer-to-peer car-sharing services are illegal. Last September, California was the first state to legalise technology-based ride-sharing services, providing a regulatory framework for them to operate.

In New York, Airbnb is being investigated for possible breaches of a 2010 law making it illegal to sub-let your apartment. New York City’s Attorney General has filed a subpoena for data on all Airbnb hosts in the city. Peers, an organisation that supports the sharing economy, is currently lobbying New York law-makers to introduce regulations to allow for Airbnb to operate legally.

Similar legal issues are starting to emerge from such initiatives in Australia. Community energy groups are grappling with their incorporation, while initiatives like rooftop gardens are being constrained by planning laws. Food sharers must comply with the same food safety rules as larger not-for-profit enterprises. Despite community support for sustainability projects, overcoming legal barriers is a significant impediment to sustainability projects getting off the ground. However, the need for specialist legal advice comes at a time when many projects do not yet have the capital to pay for lawyers.

The legal and commercial factors sustainability companies need to consider in order to get moving include determining the right legal structure, securing the right legal approvals and licences, developing an effective finance model, raising start-up capital from investors (which may include the community through crowd-sourcing) and offering a service that is in demand, understood by consumers and is simple to use.

Recognising the difficulties environmentally-minded companies face in navigating a minefield of laws and regulations, leading global law firm Ashurst has teamed up with University of Melbourne to establish a Sustainability Business Clinic.

The first of its kind in Australia, the Clinic begins this year and will see law students provide legal advice to start-up companies under the supervision and guidance of environmental lawyers.

Projects that are in the public interest benefit the environment and do not have the capacity to pay for specialised legal advice may have access to the Clinic. It is expected that a broad range of legal issues will arise, spanning environmental, planning, property, corporate, finance, intellectual property and energy law.

It is hoped the clinic will not only help sustainability initiatives get off the ground, but will also equip the lawyers of the future with the practical skills required to advise companies operating in the emerging and rapidly growing sharing economy. If Time Magazine is right, then these skills will certainly be in demand.

For more information see


Katherine Lake is a Senior Associate working in the environment and energy law team at Ashurst Australia and a Research Associate at the Centre for Resources, Energy and Environmental Law at the University of Melbourne.

Brad Jessup is a lecturer at the University of Melbourne and a former practising lawyer.
More than 100 years after the first International Women’s Day, in 1911, Australian women still face serious problems. The national rates of family violence are terrifying, and gender equity in the workplace is an ongoing battle. Zoe Nikakis explores the issues.

Last year in Victoria alone, more than 61,000 incidences of family violence were reported.

Professor Cathy Humphreys of the Department of Social Work researches family and domestic violence. She says there is a clear relationship between gender equity and more respectful relationships between men and women. The more unequal those relationships, the more power being held by one gender over the other, the more likely the abuse of that power.

“There have been massive strides around gender equity, but the levels of violence indicate we’re still in very problematic territory,” she says.

“We’re not going to be able to treat our way out of this social disaster.”

It’s clear when we look at the huge number of incidents of domestic and family violence that are occurring, and the number of family violence-related murders, that we need to be working on prevention fronts.

Professor Humphreys’ team just completed an Australian Research Council (ARC)-funded project that looked at issues of intervention, issues around governance and the intervention system itself.

“Women with a disability are much more vulnerable to family and domestic violence, as are Aboriginal women and particularly young women,” she says.

The latest national Personal Safety Survey showed how very vulnerable women between the ages of 18 and 24 are.

“We also found increased rates among people using alcohol and illegal drugs. There’s a relationship between the severity of the violence and the use of drugs and alcohol – it’s not that it causes domestic violence, but the severity of violence increases. It is also used as an excuse: it’s an accountability-free zone.”

Professor Humphreys says there are many different factors that contribute to family and domestic violence, including economic ones.

“Where you have increased poverty, inequality and unemployment, you also see increased rates of domestic violence – as we see in more unequal society, domestic violence increases again.

Family and domestic violence isn’t the only wicked problem facing women in Australia today. Gender equity in the workplace remains an all-encompassing, national issue. The pay gap between men and women is 17.5 per cent, and has consistently been between 15 per cent and 18 per cent over the past two decades.

Associate Professor of Organisational Behaviour at the Melbourne Business School Isabel Metz looks at gender equity and equality in the workplace. Like Professor Humphreys, she says there are many intervention issues that contribute to the disparity, despite gender equality legislation being introduced 25 years ago.

“This issue of the gender gap, be it in relation to pay or representation in leadership positions, is very complex. It varies by industry and sector, but it exists all the same,” she says.

“There is a growing body of evidence showing that when you control for ‘variations’, such as career breaks, personality traits – let’s assume introverts may be less willing to negotiate their pay than extroverts – length of work experience, and level of education, we still find a gender difference in pay that is not explained by all the personal factors.

“That unexplained residual is partly attributed to gender discrimination in pay. It exists and it is not explained by one factor only, nor is it explained only by women’s personal circumstances such as career breaks.

“It involves an intersection of personal factors on the women’s side, and factors embedded in socialisation (stereotypes, status hierarchy in our society, social roles ascribed to men and women) and social networks (who you know or are connected with in influential networks) on the decision-maker’s side.”

Associate Professor Metz says even if women are not ‘deficient’ in anything, such as in negotiation skills, their behaviour (in this case, how they negotiate) is interpreted differently or overlooked because of social expectations of how they should behave.

“Men are also constrained by social expectations, but they seem to be able to engage in a wider range of ‘acceptable’ behaviour than women can, without suffering backlash (i.e., without being penalised, for example, by not succeeding in their negotiation attempts for a pay rise),” she says.

“It is complicated and it would really help address this issue if all decision-makers acknowledged (because a few already do) that their decision-making processes are not infallible; they are partly subjective and clouded by perceptions and stereotypes of working women and of women in society.”

In interviews conducted as part of Dr Mett’s research, men and women executives both recognised how powerful social networks were.

“Behind closed doors, male executives will admit it is particularly difficult for their female colleagues to advance,” she says.

“Further, there is a myth that women (who are managers and want to advance) leave because of family reasons.

“I found only one in 10 women in positions at supervisor level or above left their organisation for family reasons: rather, many felt ‘pushed’ out by women-unfriendly organisational cultures. These women were not leaving to stay at home; they were leaving in search of ‘better’ employers.

“Australia’s relatively poor position in terms of accessing female talent, compared to other countries like us (e.g., the US), should raise questions about our decision-makers, not about the women,” she says.

“And the question of sexism is a reasonable one with which to start.”

For Professor Humphreys, the next research frontier actually focuses on men, and particularly fathers.

Her new ARC project – Fathers: Family Violence and Intervention Challenges – works from the fact that in Australian society most men, no matter how violent and abusive, will still be in fathering roles and will have contact with children.

“How do we engage with that evidence to look positively at what interventions and support are required for more responsive and responsible fathering?” she says.

“There’s a group of men who shouldn’t have contact with children. But there’s also a group of men who will continue to have contact with children, and who are potentially responsive to change,

“This motivation to change is created by wanting to be better fathers.

“There’s no such thing as being a good father and being domestically violent, because the children are terrified by the violence and it’s emotionally abusive. Many men recognise that.”

Associate Professor Metz’s work too is increasingly showing gender equity actually means considering men.

“Many male executives expressed the desire for flexible work arrangements or shorter working days, so they could be more involved with their families. Yet, none would raise this possibility with their colleagues or with the CEO,” she says.

“We found there was a strong culture of silence around this issue of work life balance and family responsibilities,” she says. “It’s not just a women’s issue any more.”

Professor Humphreys says we need to keep on looking at the issues around gender equity, inequality and respectful relationships between men and women.

“It needs to be part of the fabric of our society which says no to violence, and no to domestic violence,” she says.

“We have to ask what sort of society we want.”

“On International Women’s Day, to be seeing the present rate of family violence, the number of murders, the number of women being stalked, really should be a wake-up call that we’ve got to do more.”

http://socialwork.unimelb.edu.au/

Cover photo: John McKinnon for the Australian Information Service, National Library of Australia, v313/0654A
The serious benefits of happiness

The University of Melbourne is in the thick of a huge international research push to look into the benefits of positive psychology. Lisa Zilberpriver reports on the Fourth Australian Positive Psychology and Well-being Conference, held last month by the Melbourne Graduate School of Education.

Melbourne Conversation

The term ‘positive psychology’ at first glance may not suggest a serious discipline that could help thousands of people suffering from depression and perhaps even prevent suicide. But it could help ease widespread mental health problems that have arisen in China due to rapid economic, social, cultural and political change, according to Berkeley professor Dr Kaiping Peng.

“China actually reached an astounding number of people killing themselves because of the mental health problems,” Dr Peng says. “Last year, the number reached 250,000 people.”

“Happiness and well-being is a big challenge to Chinese people right now. It’s the number one health risk factor to their survival,” he says. Dr Peng presented his findings last month at the Fourth Australian Positive Psychology and Well-being Conference organised by the Melbourne Graduate School of Education, which also offers Australia’s first Master in Applied Positive Psychology.

Positive psychology is an evidence-based discipline that seeks to boost the well-being of all individuals – not just those with a diagnosed mental condition.

Its ‘founding father’, Professor Martin Seligman of the University of Pennsylvania, opened the conference.

Seligman has been investigating data on psychological practices that enhance well-being for more than two decades, but his public lecture filled the Melbourne Town Hall in a clear indication that the thrust for this type of knowledge is growing faster today than ever before.

The explosion in popularity has seen research output increase by over 400 per cent in recent years according to a 2013 paper by PhD candidate Reuben Rusk and Associate Professor Lea Waters. New centres have been established in numerous countries globally, including at the University of Melbourne.

Positive psychology techniques are being taught in a broad range of languages and settings. Of them, the most talked-about is ‘mindfulness’.

Mindfulness is not to be confused with meditation, says Professor Felicia Huppert, Emeritus Professor of Psychology and Director of the Well-being Institute at Cambridge University.

“Not all mindfulness involves meditation and not all meditation involves mindfulness,” she says.

Huppert developed an eight-week mindfulness-based stress reduction program for adolescents and looked at its effects in a controlled study with a sample of 537 pupils in 12 schools.

“There were substantial, statistically significant increases in well-being particularly at the three month period,” she says.

Huppert’s team then divided the students into high, medium and low levels of practice.

“It was absolutely clear, the more practice the greater the benefit on well-being, on resilience and on mindfulness itself,” Professor Huppert says.

Her next step will be a larger, randomised trial in which schools won’t know whether they’re teaching mindfulness or another form of relaxation.

“Some people think mindfulness is just about relaxation.”

The test will be whether those schools do equally well on the various outcome measures, Professor Huppert says.

Relaxation can cause sleepiness, whereas mindfulness is an alert state that helps children to stop their minds from wandering, she says, but teachers are the key to success.

“Training in attention is certainly something that should be taught in schools, but initially to teachers.”

“And when the children themselves learn the skills, it’s an extraordinary combination,” she says.

Schools in 12 different countries now use Huppert’s curriculum, and it has been translated into Dutch, German, Finnish and French.

Despite its popularity in Western Europe, mindfulness began in the Far East.

“It’s a very ancient technique that arose out of Buddhism, so it’s 2600 years old,” Professor Huppert says.

Millennia later, rigorous institutions uphold the value of these practices.

The UK’s National Institute for Clinical Excellence now recommends mindfulness training as a frontline treatment for the relief of recurrent depression, based on randomised control trials, according to Professor Huppert.

“It’s very good at teaching us how to manage our emotions,” she says.

“We first need to become aware of what we are feeling. Let’s say we’re aware that we’re feeling really angry right now; instead of lashing out and yelling at somebody or hitting someone, we can just sit with that for a moment and think, okay I’m feeling really angry. And now I have a choice of what kind of response I can make,” Professor Huppert explains.

Ancient Buddhists were not alone in emphasising mental techniques to boost well-being.

Dr Peng says Influential philosopher Confucius – born in 551 BC – set happiness as one of the top three duties of the Chinese people.

But China’s burgeoning national wealth has distanced ordinary individuals from that cultural heritage and the tools it gave them for finding happiness, Dr Peng says.

While flourishing economies correlate with rising levels of health in many countries, in China it may also be to blame for increased rates of depression and suicide.

This is exacerbated by cultural factors – including a lack of words for expressing feelings in Chinese.

“Linguistically speaking, we have found that there is a verbal bias in Chinese language,” Dr Peng says.

“Chinese people don’t spend a lot of time reminiscing about the mental experience, mental feelings. Instead, they talk about behaviours. They talk about events,” he adds.

“This verbal bias obviously can be helped, corrected, by this positive psychology. We emphasise the feelings you could experience, you could discuss, you could communicate with other people, he explains, adding that this would bring about cultural change.

“This unified concept can bring people together, can bring China into world communities, can do great magic in China,” Dr Peng says.

Those changes are already taking concrete form, with China’s education minister recently approving the use of a positive psychology education framework in state-run schools.

Resilience, emotional intelligence, purpose and meaning in life are making their way into lessons alongside traditional subjects like maths, language, art and science, Dr Peng says.

“Before it was only private middle schools talking about positive psychology.

“We have seen the ground shaking right now.”

http://education.unimelb.edu.au/
Defending canola from fungus

Professor Barbara Howlett is a botanist whose work focuses on fungal disease Blackleg, which can devastate canola crops. She tells Andi Horvath about it.

**Profile**

Blackleg, a devastating fungal disease in Australian canola crops, has been and continues to be a huge economic problem for the export industry in Australia. It has taken over 20 years to understand and manage it. Research into it has been the task of a dedicated group led by Professor Barbara Howlett from the University of Melbourne’s School of Botany in collaboration with experts overseas.

Professor Howlett says her early research was a mixed bag of projects. Her first published paper was on antibody levels in asthmatic children and she worked in several research fields including pollen allergy, immunology, memory in bacteria, and bread mould.

But retrospectively, she says, the work gave her a useful multidisciplinary background to access in tackling the Blackleg fungus problem in canola.

“Women often have disjointed careers, as they are juggling family responsibilities,” Professor Howlett says.

“Tackling lots of different research problems meant I had to be a flexible research thinker.”

Professor Howlett says she chose to work on the canola Blackleg pathogen, Leptosphaeria maculans, because at the time the fledgling canola industry was expanding, and it seemed likely that Blackleg would become a severe constraint, which indeed it did.

“I am fortunate to have received continuous funding for canola research from the Grains Research and Development Corporation, which invests funds from farmers and the federal government to address issues faced by Australian grain growers,” she says.

Professor Howlett’s research ranges from the “genome to paddock”. Her team has analysed the genome of the Blackleg fungus to create strategies that farmers can use to control the disease.

“We knew the resistance to the fungus in crops was quickly overcome if farmers planted one variety extensively in a region, so we located the key ‘effector’ genes and predicted they must have been in unstable parts of the genome, which they were,” she says.

With the knowledge that virulence of the Blackleg fungus is connected to these effector genes, we now have a molecular tool to rapidly monitor disease across Australia.

“We can now tell farmers before they plant their crops the risk of that canola variety developing Blackleg disease. If the risk is high, then the farmers can choose to plant another variety.”

Professor Howlett’s team also studies fungal diseases on mustard and her latest paper describes the fungal genes involved in disease.

She says her version of looming retirement plans includes new projects to work on and people to mentor.

“Tackling lots of different research problems meant I had to be a flexible research thinker.”

“Women often have disjointed careers, as they are juggling family responsibilities,” Professor Howlett says.

“In the future, we will need to interpret this immense amount of data to enable a more organism-wide approach to understanding pathways involved in disease and other processes.”

Professor Howlett’s team also studies fungal diseases on mustard and her latest paper describes the fungal genes involved in disease.

She says her version of looming retirement plans includes new projects to work on and people to mentor.

Defending canola from fungus

**“The First Humans Out of Africa: Hominin Dispersal in the Old World”**

Miegunyah Public Lecture

Professor David Lordkipanidze is acknowledged as one of the world’s leading palaeoanthropologists. He led the palaeoanthropological project at Dmanisi in the Republic of Georgia, one of the most exciting fossil hominin sites anywhere in the world, which hit global headlines with the discovery of the earliest known hominin remains outside of Africa. This lecture will address one of the most significant yet contentious debates in human evolution – the dawn of humanity and the migration of the earliest peoples out of Africa.

**Time:** 6.30 pm

**Date:** Wednesday, March 12 2014

**Venue:** Old Arts Building, The University of Melbourne, Parkville Vic 3010

**Register at:** alumni.online.unimelb.edu.au/firsthumans

Admission is free. Bookings are essential. Seating is limited.
It’s all in the brain, for humans and their pets

Ground-breaking epilepsy research in dogs will benefit humans too. In the lead-up to the Veterinary Hospital’s Open Day, Hinalei Johnston explains the link.

High-tech tools of the trade

The neurology team at the University of Melbourne Veterinary Hospital have access to some of the most comprehensive imaging facilities in Australia.

Patients have ready access to on-site MRI technology, operated by a dedicated technician and with results interpreted by expert veterinary radiologists, who understand the nuances of animal disease.

As well as the Brain Insight system being used by Dr Long and his team in their epilepsy research project, the Hospital was fortunate to acquire a high field 1.5 Tesla veterinary magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) unit, made possible by a bequest from Margaret & Lawrie Kay. The addition of the MRI unit consolidates the University of Melbourne as being at the forefront of animal imaging in Australia.

The machine’s high field strength provides image quality that is superior to that usually obtained by machines available for use in animals. In fact, the machine was designed for human use, but adapted to the special needs of animal imaging.

Seizures can reduce a dog’s lifespan by about two years, can cause behavioural changes, unconsciousness, loss of bowel and bladder control, and in extreme cases death. For the owners of epileptic dogs, the experience of seeing their dog have a seizure is distressing and many dogs are euthanised because of their seizures.

“If we can find a cure for this condition we would be able to stop these debilitating seizures and hopefully extend the lives of many dogs,” Dr Long says.

The research Dr Long and his team are undertaking focuses on a new treatment for seizures known as counter-current stimulation. It will be used to treat both dogs and humans.

It has been known for some time that electrical stimulation of certain parts of the brain can decrease the brain’s overall excitability and even reverse seizures. Dr Long and his team are investigating an implantable bionic device known as the Brain Radio, which is one of the first devices ever developed that can provide this electrical stimulation while simultaneously recording its effect on brain activity.

The Brain Radio is connected to two electrodes in the brain – one for stimulating and one for recording. However, placing the electrodes within the brain requires extremely accurate targeting, which is provided by a second device known as the Brain Insight neuronavigation system, similar to the systems used by neurosurgeons to operate on people during brain surgery.

The Veterinary Hospital now has a Brain Insight system which, with the hospital’s 1.5 Tesla MRI scanner, has been essential in performing this research: Dr Long and his team have discovered it is safe and feasible to place small electrodes deep within the brain with high precision and without side effects.

“Presently the treatment for dog epilepsy involves anticonvulsant medication, but about a third of these dogs don’t respond to the drugs and just under half experience side effects,” Dr Long says.

“Since human epilepsy is very similar to canine epilepsy, successful treatment of seizures in dogs is expected to lead to the use of this device in people, potentially within the following two years.

“Epilepsy is debilitating – not only because patients with epilepsy suffer severe side effects from medication, but also because patients never know when their next seizure will occur, severely limiting the activities they can take part in. As a result, a cure for epilepsy would dramatically change the lives of both people and dogs.

“The Brain Radio could be the effective alternative treatment we are looking for to help these dogs.”

If successful, this treatment will revolutionise the treatment of epilepsy in patients by providing a treatment method that does not require drugs.

“A major limitation for our research is funding. There is a lot of exciting research that we want to undertake which is of benefit to pets and humans but the common issue is financial support. As the Veterinary Hospital doesn’t receive government funding, it can be challenging to generate funds to support research that can improve the quality of life for pets and humans,” Dr Long says.

For more information www.vh.unimelb.edu.au

Dr Sam Long, Head of Neurology with patient, Ruby. Credit: Wyndham Weekly.

CAMPUSS LIFE

There are many parallels between the conditions suffered by both humans and pets, as they are exposed to the same environment, which means research in medical and veterinary science fields often has human implications.

Researchers at the University of Melbourne are focusing on ground-breaking research into a range of conditions suffered both by animals and humans. The research will hopefully change the way pets and humans are diagnosed and treated, and their overall quality of life. These areas include hormone disorders, such as diabetes and digestive problems in cats and dogs. Dr Sam Long is a Board-certified specialist in neurology, a neurosurgeon and the Head of Neurology at the University of Melbourne Veterinary Hospital. One of his particular areas of research interest is the treatment of epilepsy in dogs.

“Epilepsy is a debilitating disease not only for humans but for dogs too. It is one of the most common neurological diseases seen in dogs where up to five per cent of all presentations to vets are for seizures and 30 per cent of dogs are never well controlled with medication,” Dr Long says.

“People suffer from the same condition and a similar number of people never have acceptable control over their seizures.”

Seizures can reduce a dog’s lifespan by about two years, can cause behavioural changes, unconsciousness, loss of bowel and bladder control, and in extreme cases death. For the owners of epileptic dogs, the experience of seeing their dog have a seizure is distressing and many dogs are euthanised because of their seizures.

“Presently the treatment for dog epilepsy involves anticonvulsant medication, but about a third of these dogs don’t respond to the drugs and just under half experience side effects,” Dr Long says.

“Since human epilepsy is very similar to canine epilepsy, successful treatment of seizures in dogs is expected to lead to the use of this device in people, potentially within the following two years.

“Epilepsy is debilitating – not only because patients with epilepsy suffer severe side effects from medication, but also because patients never know when their next seizure will occur, severely limiting the activities they can take part in. As a result, a cure for epilepsy would dramatically change the lives of both people and dogs.

“The Brain Radio could be the effective alternative treatment we are looking for to help these dogs.”

If successful, this treatment will revolutionise the treatment of epilepsy in patients by providing a treatment method that does not require drugs.

“A major limitation for our research is funding. There is a lot of exciting research that we want to undertake which is of benefit to pets and humans but the common issue is financial support. As the Veterinary Hospital doesn’t receive government funding, it can be challenging to generate funds to support research that can improve the quality of life for pets and humans,” Dr Long says.

For more information www.vh.unimelb.edu.au

CAMPUSS LIFE
We are now: the role and future of feminist research

Laura Soderlind surveys the feminist research and theory landscape.

Scholarly research, like many things, comes imbued with certain assumptions, biases and omissions. Take history and historical research. Yawning over centuries and straddling continents, so often the history recorded, studied and researched is a history of the accomplishments, milestones and experiences of men.

It is the history of royal bloodlines, religions, battlegrounds, explorers and scientists. Women have often been reduced to the footnoted wife or mother of a notable historical figure.

However, this account of history often poses as neutral, and just the way things happened. Feminist academic and researcher Professor Sheila Jeffreys says much research in the social sciences does not notice or mention women. There is a patriarchal bias in almost all the research carried out in universities, she says.

Feminist historians have set about excavating women’s history. “‘Anonymous was a woman.’ The history of history has biases that run deep into the discipline that for so long was pockmarked with silences and omissions,” she says.

A “neutral” history is, by the victors, Prime Minister Churchill observed. And according to a feminist analysis, men were the victors in populist sociology.

In parallel terms, Virginia Woolf celebrated early feminist winter observed that, “for most of history, Anonymous was a woman.”

The history of history has biases that run along fault lines of race, colour, class and gender. Though there is still a mainstream vision of history, it is increasingly informed by the research and insights of those confronting the mainstream vision from feminists, Marxists and civil rights movements to post-colonial theorists. These biases span other disciplines too. Fewer books by women are studied or critically appraised by researchers. The standard physiology that underscores textbook medical research was based on a 70kg male. That remained until the 1980s.

It is the job of feminist researchers and academics to challenge and critique where research and scholarship has omitted to consider women’s perspectives or achievements.

“This is a mammoth task arching back into history and spiralling into the future. It is inbuilt with many of its own challenges,” Professor Jeffreys explains, “there are challenges in getting funding for research since research on women is never a priority.” She says feminist research is also less likely to be favourably reviewed.

Publication opportunities may also be limited.

Feminist research is not only an exercise in looking at the gaps and holes where women’s perspectives were ignored: it is also profoundly driven by the contemporary issues facing women.

“Research is needed on the sexual harassment directed at women in politics,” Professor Jeffreys says.

“Women are needed to look at clothing requirements of women in politics and public life,” she suggests.

“Gillard’s shoes come to mind. What does this do to how these women feel about themselves and the respect given to them by others.”

In an environment where research funding is increasingly scarce, Professor Jeffreys is concerned about what this means for future feminist research.

“New generations of feminist researchers will find it increasingly difficult to be radical in their subject matter or approach,” she says.

Feminist research, in essence, scrutinises the mainstream and the spoken or unspoken assumptions about women. This means challenging the sexist behaviour and opinions of people and society.

Most feminists find this is insufficiently welcomed by those being criticised. Professor Jeffreys considers this is the same in the academic marketplace for ideas, research and opinions.

This may mean feminist research will become more confined to socially palatable, more ‘white collar feminist’ areas, like policies around maternity leave and women on boards. These are important areas for feminist research, however Professor Jeffreys is concerned that other more controversial areas may be left unresearched.

Areas like prostitution and pornography and their relationship with sexual violence may not receive the attention needed from feminist researchers.

One of the other challenges facing feminist research is it often fails to receive the same legitimacy and high regard as research in other areas.

For instance, almost all people have a position on pornography, from feminists, politicians and religious groups to pornography consumers. Everyone is a stakeholder in these matters because everyone has an opinion and bedroom.

However when feminists research these matters, using rigorous academic methodologies, it is frequently dismissed when it comes up against a decidedly firm opinion.

Researching for findings, data and “facts” among this landscape of opinion among the quiet idols of patriarchy is another challenge faced by feminist researchers.

So how can feminists research these issues and present their findings in a way that is received similarly to those of medical or scientific researchers?

How can feminist research into acutely contested issues gain the social acceptance needed for it to inform the creation of policy and public discussions?

How can feminist researchers continue to push frontiers when funding is difficult to come by?

More research is needed to find out.

Laura Soderlind is a PhD candidate researching parallels between literature and pornography. She also works for University Communications.

http://spss.unimelb.edu.au/
On Facebook...for study

Maya Borom explores a project from researchers at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education who are using Facebook to increase classroom participation.

**GRADUATE STUDIES**

The Facebook page was created in 2011 in response to the "inclusion" degrees, which focus on special supports to engage with students who are enrolled in the confines of the traditional classroom. The page also offers ideas on how to engage students with disabilities and actively encourages student feedback. The MGSE_Inclusion Facebook page includes links to a story about a second grade student creating a "buddy bench" for children to sit on if they are feeling left out or lonely, pictorial charts on building language, and visual transition cues. It also has posts to relevant jobs which encourages current students to think about their transition from student to working professional.

**In Brief**

$42.5 million project set to transform the VCA

The University of Melbourne and the Victorian Government have committed more than $40 million in funding to strengthen the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) and Melbourne Conservatorium of Music. The funds will be used to turn the Dodds Street stables into the VCA's visual arts wing, creating a new entry point to the University and opening the new studios to local business and residents. Victorian Premier Denis Napthine said the redevelopment would transform the VCA & MCM campus to the wider community, "The VCA campus sits among some of Victoria's pre-eminent arts institutions. "This project will not only ensure that the VCA maintains its high standards in arts training and research, it will open up the campus to the wider community," he says.

University of Melbourne Vice-Chancellor Professor Glyn Davis says the project would be a major boost to the VCA & MCM and arts precinct in Melbourne and would further open the campus to the community.

"We are delighted that this initiative will further add to the cultural vitality of our city and will provide a valuable creative learning hub for tomorrow's leading artists." Major gifts to the Campaign for the University of Melbourne played a key role in the project's realisation, including totalling $10 million from philanthropic bodies the Myer Foundation, the Ian Potter Foundation and Merton and Louise Myer.

Unions still have a role to play: study

Australian unions still play a crucial role in monitoring and enforcing employer compliance with labour laws on behalf of workers, new University of Melbourne Law School research has determined. The study Trade Unions and the Enforcement of Minimum Employment Standards -- was based on the activities of five prominent Australian unions, and found unions regularly undertook a variety of enforcement-related activities, including:

- The provision of advice and support to individual workers and union organisers;
- Preparing and delivering education and training to organisers and union delegates, and
- Resolving individual and collective cases of non-compliance by employers with minimum standards through both informal and formal channels.

"These findings suggest that notwithstanding declining membership and a sometimes hostile legal framework, unions continue to play an important regulatory role in ensuring observance of legal minimum standards by Australian employers," according to Associate Professor John Howe, Director of the University's Centre for Employment and Labour Relations Law. Associate Professor Howe says the study demonstrates that unions operate in varied and evolving ways.

"Unions go about their enforcement work and activities in distinctively different ways than they would have twenty years ago," he says. "They've adapted their approaches and strategies to the different economic, legal and workplace environments in which they find themselves operating in.

"The case studies suggest that some unions in particular have developed sophisticated, creative and effective strategies for monitoring and securing compliance with minimum standards that are responsive to the characteristics and dynamics of the industries in which they work."

But the report does make some recommendations for improvement.

"Unions need to increase formalisation of their policies and procedures, redouble efforts to publicise 'wins' and raise public awareness of the positive role unions play in promoting and securing compliance with minimum labour standards," according to Associate Professor Howe.

Greater opportunities for collaboration and sharing of innovative practices between and within unions, as well as greater scope for strategic planning and reflection on these activities and their value to trade union legitimacy, are also mooted.

Multiple sclerosis under the spotlight

Veteran and mid-career researchers are receiving vital funding for research into multiple sclerosis, thanks to MS Research Australia.

Three researchers working at the University of Melbourne and the Florey Institute of Neuroscience and Mental Health have received $442,000 to further understanding of this crippling disease, which affects nearly 24,000 Australians.

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a disease of the central nervous system in which the myelin (fatty insulating sheathes protecting nerve fibres) becomes damaged and scarred. This impairs how well nerves conduct impulses, affecting a person's motor, sensory and even cognitive functions.

The causes of MS are unknown, but genetic and environmental factors are suspected of having some role. Three quarters of those living with MS are female.

Professor Trevor Kilpatrick is the Director of the Centre for Neuroscience and the Melbourne Neurosciences Institute at the University of Melbourne, leads the MS division at the Florey, and is a neurologist and Head of the MS Unit at the Royal Melbourne Hospital. He has been awarded $92,000 to continue his world-recognised research into the functional implications of genetic variation in a specific gene called MERITK and its role in MS susceptibility.

Dr Simon Murray from the University's Department of Anatomy and Neuroscience received $180,000 and, working in the laboratory of Dr Holly Cate, will deepen his understanding of the growth factor BDNF, investigating its potential to promote myelin regeneration in MS.

Dr Stan Mitew also from the Department of Anatomy and Neuroscience and colleague Dr Ben Emery received $150,000 to investigate whether mechanisms for myelination that occur during development can be reactivated to enhance myelin repair in MS.
Australia has one of the lowest levels of government support for research and development

Loss of car manufacturing underlines the need for industry to take the lead in R&D. Eoinahessy reports.

Research

Australia has one of the lowest levels of government support for R&D and innovation development in the world, and business must build industry-specific R&D corporations if Australia is to compete in the global economy, a policy brief from the Melbourne Institute at the University of Melbourne shows.

The study highlights that the US government has committed over 0.22 per cent of GDP to business R&D and the UK government 0.14 per cent, while the Australian government has committed 0.09 per cent.

The report’s author Professor Beth Webster says public debate often erroneously suggests Australian governments are generous in this area.

“There are many good examples of successful cultural sites but without all these key elements, the project may fail long term,” she says.

The study is part of an Australian Research Council grant between the University of Melbourne, Deakin University, the City of Melbourne Indigenous Arts Program, Reconciliation Victoria and The Victorian Traditional Owners Land Justice Group.

The book launch was another component of the overall strategy with the next step being a creative consultation with traditional owners in regional Victoria, the research team explored the processes behind Indigenous cultural placemaking.

Dr Janet McGaw also from the University’s Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning who leads the ARC grant said “In Australia that is moving toward decolonisation, we need to ask the question, does the now-familiar institutional model of the cultural centre need to be re-thought and we have gone through extensive consultation to investigate this aspect,” she says.

“The advantage of the R&D corporation model is its comparative permanence. A program that is established under an act of parliament is less prone to annual budget cuts. Confidence in the longevity of a program gives the industry, and the research community that services it, the reassurance it needs to establish the architecture to support it,” she says.

The Melbourne Institute Policy Brief Series is a collection of research publications that examines current policy issues and provides an independent framework for examining pertinent issues in public debate.

Indigenous cultural sites under the spotlight in new national study

A national study has investigated Indigenous cultural sites around Australia to determine how they bring benefit to Indigenous communities and the potential for a major cultural venture in the heart of Melbourne. By Rebecca Scott.

An Australian study of Indigenous cultural sites and spaces in urban and regional areas, led by the University of Melbourne in partnership with the City of Melbourne and Traditional Owners, explores what makes a culturally appropriate representation of Aboriginality.

The publication Indigenous Place: Contemporary Buildings, Landmarks and Places of Significance in South-East Australia and Beyond was launched during Melbourne’s Indigenous Arts Festival and involved preliminary research towards creating a Victorian Indigenous Cultural Education and Knowledge Centre in Melbourne.

In the most comprehensive publication of its kind, the study surveyed artworks, landscape and civic projects as well as purpose-built Aboriginal cultural centres and museums in all major Australian cities and some remote and regional areas.

It aimed in particular to respond to the lack of Indigenous cultural centres in Australian metropolitan centres and the difficulties faced in building and sustaining them in remote locations.

Associate Professor Anoma Pieris from the University of Melbourne’s Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning and an author of the publication said it revealed the complexity of processes, politics and practices behind the production of architecture for Indigenous culture.

“The creation and maintenance of these cultural spaces required key elements such as sustained collaborative efforts between state government bodies, Aboriginal communities and local interest groups.

“There are many good examples of successful cultural sites but without all these key elements, the project may fail long term,” she says.

The authors say that many historical Indigenous cultural sites, including missions and reserves, are related to settler conflict, dispossession and massacres.

However contemporary sites include Aboriginal organisations, commemorative sites, and political sites and cultural centres, which are often closely connected to histories of political activism and community empowerment.

“In these terms, we are exploring contemporary Indigenous placemaking and asking such questions as what is an Indigenous cultural space? How is it located, identified and made visible through creative acts? What purpose and benefit might it serve to the Indigenous communes?” Dr McGaw says.

Annette Xiberras, Co-Chair of the Victorian Traditional Owner Land Justice Group and Wurundjeri Elder said there was widespread support from Traditional Owners and the community at large to support the design and construction of a facility in the Melbourne CBD that would showcase the First Nations ancient and living cultural heritage.

“The book launch was another component of the overall strategy with the next step being a full feasibility study,” she says.

Melbourne architectural graduate Rueben Berg, co-founder and Director of Indigenous Architecture Victoria, an organisation that aims to strengthen Indigenous design and culture, and an author on the study, said Aboriginality was an uncharted area for architects to be inspired for any new project in the built environment.

“This book shows us that there is so much more out there in terms of how Aboriginality is represented culturally, which can then be used as a framework for any new project, whether it is by the Indigenous community or by any architects,” she says.

“Aboriginality is more than people typically perceive it to be, such as associations with Alice Springs, the desert and Kakadu. There is so much more going on that can inspire exciting new designs,” she says.

Ms Xiberras added the days of stark buildings with “boomerangs on the wall” are long dead and that “our people demand our buildings to be economically sustainable, multifunctional, environmentally friendly, of international standard and unique precints.

The project team say major funding would have to come from Australian governments and the private sector in order to achieve the goal of creating the new cultural venture.

The learnings of the ARC grant have been incorporated into teaching in the Melbourne School of Design, where studios are being run asking students to look at how the built environment can work to enhance the lives of Indigenous communities.

“We have strategies in place to improve pathways for Indigenous students into the Bachelor of Environments degree to increase the numbers of Indigenous architects, landscape architects and urban planners into the professions responsible for the built environments of the future,” Dr McGaw says.

The book was launched as part of the 2014 Melbourne Indigenous Arts Festival.

http://www.abp.unimelb.edu.au/research/indigenous placemaking
A budding partnership

Yves Makhoul explores the University’s partnership with the 2014 Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show and City Square

An exciting partnership has been formed between the University of Melbourne, City of Melbourne, Nursery and Garden Industry Association of Victoria (NGIV) and the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show that will culminate in a pop-up garden.

The display will showcase the unique talents of the Melbourne School of Land and Environment’s urban horticulture teaching and research staff, who are located at the University’s Burnley campus.

With the onset of rapid climate change, increasing the use of green infrastructure (such as street trees, urban parks, green roofs and green walls) and retaining water in cities can significantly reduce heat loads, reduce stormwater run-off and improve liveability.

Exploring this through the pop-up garden, the design features a modified shipping container with multiple ‘green infrastructure’ elements, including a modular green roof, green facades and living walls, an ‘urban forest’ and vegetable rain garden.

While demonstrating an innovative use of technology, plants and materials, the garden uses an approach that is practical and visually appealing.

The 11x9 metre display will be on-show at City Square from Tuesday 18 to Thursday 20 March. It will then be exhibited at the 2014 Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show (MIFGS) at Carlton Gardens from Wednesday 26 to Sunday 30 March.

As the most successful horticultural event in the Southern Hemisphere (second in the world only to the Chelsea Flower Show in the UK), MIFGS attracts more than 110,000 international, national and local visitors over five days.

Mr John Rayner, Senior Lecturer in Urban Horticulture, says he is excited by the event and what Burnley staff have accomplished over recent months in designing, building, growing and preparing the display, with considerable help from the nursery and garden industry.

“This is a unique garden, as it combines our research work in green infrastructure with a very modern approach to horticulture and design,” he says.

“I’m looking forward to the reception it will receive from the public.”

The University of Melbourne offers a range of courses in urban horticulture and landscape management to suit various interests and previous level of study.

There are short courses, such as Discovering Horticulture, to more advanced coursework programs including the Associate Degree in Urban Horticulture and Master of Urban Horticulture, in which students learn how to design, implement and manage urban landscapes while gaining an understanding of the biological, socio-cultural and environmental factors that shape horticultural systems.

A new program for 2014 is the Specialist Certificate in Green Roofs and Walls. Delivered as two intensive subjects (in June and December) at the Burnley campus, this is the first higher education program in Australasia dedicated to this area of study.
Looking at images of Muslim women

Annie Rahilly talks to the researchers behind a project looking at the content and effects of images used in contemporary human rights campaigns of Muslim and ‘other’ women, why such images drive global campaigns, and how they enable and constrain the participation of Muslim and immigrant women in public life in Australia.

RESEARCH

Public awareness campaigns have one thing in common; they use confronting images to make their point. The more shocking the image shown, the more people become compelled to intervene in the issue.

Photos of crying toddlers with ribs protruding, photos of war-ravaged and burned villages, images of terrified Afghan women peering from behind a veil: these are the stock images of campaigns hoping to incite outrage among those with a western voice and platform.

However, there are complex politics that surround this use of dramatic imagery. Could the images used by international advocacy groups to compel western audiences to act upon the impoverished and marginalised women in Afghanistan actually be making it more difficult for these same women, alienating them from those who advocate for them and discouraging them from integrating with Australian society?

Arguably, the success of these images is based on representing and enhancing the sense of vulnerability, disempowerment and ‘otherness’ of these women.

A multi-disciplinary team from the University of Melbourne is looking at the use of images, how and why such images drive some global human rights campaigns and how these images enable and constrain the participation of Muslim and immigrant women in public life in Australia.

With a grant from Melbourne Social Equity Institute, Dr Maree Pardy, Dr Juliet Rogers from the Faculty of Arts and Professor Dianne Otto and Dr Farrah Ahmed from Melbourne Law School are bringing knowledge of gender and human rights initiatives and insight into the uses of images to represent causes.

“We want to look at images and analyse their intentions. We also need to deepen our analysis and understanding of the impacts of these images of women in Australia and in other countries,” Dr Pardy says.

“Some extremist groups maintain Muslim women are oppressed everywhere and the veil is a symbol of oppression. Our previous research highlights the effects of images used in campaigns, how and why such images drive global campaigns in multicultural societies, where campaign material can alienate and insult local Muslim individuals and groups.

These campaigns become divisive as they highlight, and potentially enhance, the foreign ‘terrible-ness’ of circumstances in other places. How these images and campaigns shape and impact on narratives of multiculturalism will be investigated in this research project.

Through a detailed analysis of currently circulating images of Muslims, immigrants and other women, the researchers hope to gain new perspectives on how such views affect their participation in everyday circumstances and in engagement in the political sphere.

Muslim women’s organisations throughout Australia will be invited to consider the effects of campaign images. A picture tells a thousand words. But sometimes it tells more about those taking and promoting the picture, than those depicted.

http://www.socialequity.unimelb.edu.au/

Image: Muslimah Pride

Melbourne’s world-class education rank confirmed

Education at the University of Melbourne has been ranked second in the world in the latest QS World University Rankings by Subject.

The rankings list the top 200 universities around the world in 30 subject areas. The University is listed in 29 subjects, including law and accounting and finance, both ranked eighth, psychology, which is ranked 10th and medicine, environmental science and linguistics all of which were ranked 12th.

It has 11 subjects ranked in the top 20 and 27 subjects in the top 50. University of Melbourne Vice-Chancellor Professor Glyn Davis said it was pleasing to see a diverse range of subjects performing well against international peers.

The University has ranked well across social sciences, engineering and technology, life sciences and medicine and arts and humanities, giving students wanting to study in Australia access to a world-class education, “he says.

“It is particularly pleasing to see education being recognised as a global leader; this is testament to the outstanding staff within the Melbourne Graduate School of Education and its constant pursuit of excellence.”

Dean of the Melbourne Graduate School of Education Professor Field Rickards says he is delighted with the announcement.

“It is very pleasing to see that our research is having such global impact and that Australia has a graduate school recognised as one of the very best in the world,” he says.

“The ranking is a strong endorsement of the outstanding work of our dedicated and highly talented staff who are committed to ensuring our future teachers receive the highest standards of training based on the latest research and are highly prepared for the difficulties of the classroom. “

The QS (Quacquarelli Symonds) World University is an annual league table of the top universities in the world. For the 2014 Rankings by subject QS evaluated 3002 universities and ranked 689 in total.
Alumna is Victorian Senior Australian of the Year

Christine Durham's story is one of hope. In 1991, Dr Durham was involved in a serious car accident. “I was really smashed up,” she says. “I had about 42 breaks to my chest, so I was in agony for a couple of years – I still am in agony!”

Dr Durham also received significant brain injuries, which doctors feared would leave her permanently incapacitated. “The brain would improve during the first six months, yet at the end of that time I still couldn’t feed myself and I felt very bewildered,” she says.

“I was having a shower and using Parisienne, of which my husband Ted gives me a case every birthday.”

“I was thinking, ‘this is a luxury – isn’t it wonderful that we can afford to buy this soap every now and then?’”

“The epilepsy was profound – the soap representing one of life’s joys and an antidote to her resentment.”

“It hit me out of the blue that hatred this man was a luxury I couldn’t afford.”

“Another hurdle lay with her family, from whom she felt emotionally isolated.”

“I thought, ‘My husband doesn’t love me, because no one could love this hideous creature I’ve become’. I was always a mess and I felt shocking.”

Again, symbolism aided Dr Durham’s recovery.

“I was picking honesty (the flower) in the garden and it spoke to me, telling me I needed to be honest with my husband,” she says.

“So I said to Ted, ‘You don’t really love me’, and he explained that he did love me, but that he saw things differently.”

Brain injury and recovery’s hardships too often isolate sufferers from their loved ones. They are locked in a grim struggle, trying to overcome their own limitations and being unable to freely communicate with others.

Dr Durham’s conversation with her husband opened a new window.

“Suddenly trying to understand that he was suffering too was interesting, because at that point I had felt so sorry for myself – I couldn’t see anyone else’s suffering as being anything other than minimal.”

Dr Durham’s experiences inspired her to write about her condition and the seemingly hopeless situation faced by many others with acquired brain injuries. Her first book, Doing Up Buttons, appeared in 1997 and chronicled her rehabilitation. An incident in the United States greatly informed her outlook.

“I travelled over to the US, thinking the information about brain injury would be greater in America due to there being more people with brain injuries,” she says.

Victoria Brookes’, chapter of the Brain Injury Association impressed on Dr Durham the knowledge that improvement is limitless.

“A gentleman got up at a meeting and said, ‘You keep on improving until the day you die’,” she says.

“That suddenly opened a door for me to realise I could keep improving my situation, well after the two-year mark.”

Dr Durham became a full-time advocate for brain injury sufferers. Her studies expanded and in 2001 she published Chasing Ideas: The fun of freeing your child’s imagination. A teacher by trade, she encourages positive thinking and adaptability. Hope remains the predominant virtue.

“I believe in the plasticity of the human spirit and that’s just as important as the plasticity of the brain,” she says.

“It’s only recently that we’re starting to look at how belief opens up the possibility that people can do things they previously thought impossible.”

Dr Durham explains that many brain injury sufferers feel ‘locked in’, resulting in isolation and depression.

“Many brain injury sufferers lose their families,” she says.

“I think that’s because a lot of people don’t understand brain injury. If they understood the brain a bit more, they might have more sympathy.”

Dr Durham discovered that for some an unlikely positive could be drawn from brain injury: “I interviewed three people during my PhD who said brain injury was both the worst and the best thing that had happened to them,” she says.

“They appreciate being alive and they’re aware of their strengths and weaknesses; they feel wise.”

http://alumni.unimelb.edu.au/
Industry partnership to grow next generation of architects

A new partnership between Dulux Australia and the University of Melbourne’s Faculty of Architecture Building and Planning will enhance industry links in the areas of paints, colours and coatings, including developing cutting-edge research. By Rebecca Scott.

Dulux Australia will become the major sponsor of the gallery space in the Architecture, Building and Planning Faculty’s new building and will add depth to students’ learning about current industry practice on paints, colours and coatings.

The partnership also provides opportunities for research collaboration between Dulux and the faculty’s leading researchers, with some projects already under way.

Sustainable Building expert Mr Chris Jensen knows the benefits of industry experts collaborating with researchers. He has a longstanding research relationship with the company, evaluating the effectiveness of Dulux cool roof coatings, which reflect heat.

“There is a lot of interest in this area, to make buildings work harder and smarter to reduce cooling energy. Preventing the heat entering a building just makes the most sense,” he says.

Regardless of location, commercial buildings typically need year-round cooling so high performance heat reflective coatings can provide major energy and CO₂ savings for the construction and commercial industries.”

Through close collaboration with Dulux, his research team has been able to fine-tune their energy modelling to isolate the effect of Dulux’s products.

They are the only Australian research group working to calibrate a model for future predictions of building cooling performance.

“Building energy modelling is the way of the future. It has been great to put this work into action through our relationship with Dulux to test their products,” Mr Jensen says.

For architect, design blogger and Melbourne graduate Ella Leoncio, the use of colour is integral to her work.

“Colour is one of the first things I consider in the design process. It’s so integral to the way I imagine the quality of a space. Colour can really change how a space feels,” she says.

It was through her blog, Pages from my Moleskine, that Dulux approached her to design sets with some of their forecasted colour palettes.

“For this project, showing people how to generate interesting spaces through the use of colour was a great creative process to undergo,” she says.

“Working with Dulux helped me refine my understanding of colour and develop a greater understanding of its potential.

“It encouraged me to experiment with colours I may not otherwise have considered. The palettes challenged me to step outside of the norms and to pull together something bolder and more aspirational to share with the public.”

The industry partnership with the University of Melbourne is the largest sponsorship of a university by Dulux Australia and demonstrates a commitment to world-class built environment education.

Mr Phil White, General Manager, Trade Division, Dulux Australia says this partnership builds on Dulux’ commitment to fostering the next generation of built environment professionals.

“We are proud to partner with such a prestigious institution,” he says.

“We are also excited to contribute to the construction of the new Architecture building, which will not only provide students with an engaging and interactive learning environment, but will enhance the architectural landscape of the campus for all University students.”

The new building will provide an unparalleled facility for built-environment education in Australia, positioning teaching and learning at the centre of the physical building.

Tom Kvan, Dean, Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning says the Faculty is very pleased to have the support of Dulux Australia for future students.

“Like the company, we seek also to protect, maintain and enhance the spaces and places in which we live and work,” he says.

“The exhibition culture of our Faculty is strong and the communication of research and learning is central to our purpose.

“By naming the primary gallery of our new building the Dulux Gallery, and creating learning opportunities with our students, we are demonstrating the importance and value of industry partnership in the field of design.”

http://www.abp.unimelb.edu.au/

Colour design scheme by Ella Leoncio Credit: Mim Design/Ella Leoncio/Bree Leech for Dulux
Why do our eyelids twitch?

Have you ever had one of those annoying eyelid twitches that can last for a couple of days? Andi Horvath explains the condition.

**HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED?**

These spasms usually occur in the lower eyelids, and tend to happen when people are stressed, tired or have too much caffeine. Even more annoyingly, if the twitching is large enough, the image in that eye may also jump.

Thought people feel like they are literally on the blink, thankfully it seems to go away on its own. Voice ponders: are eyelid twitches triggered by some change in the biochemistry of the body, misfiring in the brain, the muscles or the nerves? And why does the eyelid twitch, why not the knee cap or little finger? What’s special about the eyelid nerves or muscles?

Associate Professor Larry Abel from the department of Optometry and Vision Sciences explains: “One of the muscles that move the eye is called the superior oblique and a twitch is referred to as a myokymia, so unsurprisingly this condition is called a superior oblique myokymia,” he says.

“Because this type of eye twitch is temporary and benign – it has no harmful effects – it’s not the subject of much research.”

There seems to be only one, retrospective study of 15 patients, done 15 years ago at Johns Hopkins Hospital. They found if these twitches aren’t associated with any other bits of the face starting to twitch as well, that they are indeed benign. They couldn’t say what the cause was.

The factors were associated with them though are same ones that are part of the folk wisdom concerning the condition – fatigue, stress, caffeine, alcohol, smoking.

...get more rest, reduce stress, easy up on the coffees. But you already knew that.

Often they will go away on their own. If they don’t, surgery is a possible option, as is botulinum toxin (Botox) injection.

Other treatments have been suggested, such as Magnesium deficiency, but the science has yet to be done to confirm or deny the claim. While they think they know why the superior oblique twitches (an artery pressing on its nerve), people are left in the dark about eyelid twitches.

So why isn’t there more research on an eye twitch problem that annoys so many people? In an environment where research funding is constrained, it is directed largely towards problems that tend to be relatively common and cause severe disability or death.

Associate Professor Abel says one of the conditions he studies – congenital nystagmus – is relatively common and often causes significant visual impairment in individuals with the condition, but it receives negligible research funding worldwide, since the impairment isn’t as severe as that in, say, retinitis pigmentosa, an inherited condition that also results in severe vision impairment.

“So this sort of funding triage means that you probably won’t soon be seeing any state-of-the-art imaging studies of lid twitching coming out of the Melbourne Brain Centre’s new 7T MRI scanner,” he says.

“So what can you do in the interim? Try to get more rest, reduce stress, easy up on the coffees. But you already knew that.”

https://www.optometry.unimelb.edu.au/
German composer and opera great Richard Wagner coined a term that has come to define opera: gesamtkunstwerk, the total work of art.

Today, opera is evolving to entertain both its traditional and new audiences. Alumni from the Victorian College of the Arts and Melbourne Conservatorium of Music are leading this transition as performers on the contemporary Opera stage.

VCA graduate and baritone Simon Meadows has been cast as The Commissioner in Puccini’s Madama Butterfly as part of Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour. The production, which will run from 21 March to 12 April, will test the boundaries of traditional opera and take a new approach with its unusual location, pulling opera into the 21st century by finding new audiences while offering a fresh take on one of the world’s most famous operas for devotees of the art.

Mr Meadows says there is no better way to use the natural spectacle of Sydney Harbour and engage the key asset of the cosmopolitan city than to draw new audiences to contemporary opera. “Opera Australia is taking on a new approach, trying to make opera much more accessible. This is apparent in projects like Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour, now in its third year,” Mr Meadows says.

He studied at the Victorian College of the Arts from 1991 to 1996, graduating with a BA (Music) and a Grad Dip (Opera). During that time, he was also the recipient of the Mabel Kent Singing Scholarship.

For Mr Meadows, his appreciation for opera developed from a young age. Always a fan of life experience is crucial to vocal development. “My voice has taken time to really develop. My peak times and the times of little, always keep me grounded,” he says.

Since graduating at the VCA, Mr Meadows has worked and travelled extensively and believes life experience is crucial to vocal development. “My voice has taken time to really develop. A lot of that is to do by staying focused, with personal maturity, travel and life experience,” he says.

Recent roles have included performing the role of Belcore in Donizetti’s L’Elisir D’Amore with UK company Opera Up Close last year. He made his German debut singing the baritone solo in Swiss composer Frank Martin’s Terra Ras at Berlin’s Heilige Kreuz Kirche, and then performed The Marquis D’Obigny in Melbourne Opera’s production of Verdi’s La Fiamma.

Mr Meadows believes Australia is well positioned to lead efforts to extend opera from its traditional roots. “Australia is in a great position with venues like the Myer Music Bowl to try different venues. It’s an experience where they realise the possibilities ahead of them, given the obvious challenge of filming in an unknown and exotic location.

The travelling studio is part of the Faculty of the VCA & Melbourne Conservatorium of Music’s international plan to give students and alumni a global experience while also fostering relationships with international partners. The VCA student crew selected to work on this project were required to produce a seven-minute film involving two Australian actors and two Indian leads.

This presented an exciting opportunity for them, given the obvious challenge of filmmaking in an unknown and exotic location. Most significant of these challenges, Mr Howard says, involved working with strangers in a strange place. “Coming to terms with the protocols and sociology of the Indian film industry and the people in it was just as much a part of the filming challenges,” he says.

“This required professionalism, patience, diplomacy and openness – all of the things that go with collaboration – which is about finding out what you don’t know. Sometimes the mindset has to be changed.”

Ms Wang-Ward says the experience gave her greater insight into what was involved in collaboration and working in exotic locations and different cultures. “We are so fortunate to have had an amazing introduction to Bollywood and the film industry in India. More than anything else, we have a better appreciation of working with people from different cultures,” she says.

Mr Howard believes the resulting film, gaai, offers a unique perspective on an experience many young people go through, where there is an understanding of the difference between two people which then becomes a turning point in their lives. “It’s an experience where they realise the path they have started on may not be the path they should be on. “This film shows if you do not listen to your inner voice, when certain magic moments arrive, then you have to live with the consequences,” he says.

In London, one of the companies I worked in had a theatre in the back of a pub!” he says. Fellow VCA graduates Kathryn Radcliffe and Richard Hansen will also perform in the chorus of Madama Butterfly and are both looking forward to the opportunity. Mr Hansen says the unique location and the sheer size of the production present a great opportunity. “I’ve always enjoyed performing, being on stage and being in a show. It is good to combine both classical music and performance through opera,” he says.

http://vca.mcm.unimelb.edu.au/

VCA Opera graduates have Sydney Harbour all aflutter

VCA graduate and professional Opera Singer Simon Meadows will star in a new production of Madama Butterfly on Sydney Harbour. By Liz Banks-Anderson.
I have now been living in the Sochi Olympic Village for one week. There’s so much happening here I don’t know where to start! Our ski cross team arrived three days after the Opening Ceremony. At first I was a bit disappointed to miss the march, but given the scheduling of our event, right towards the end of the Games, it didn’t make sense to fly into Russia so early.

Instead, I was lucky enough to catch up with my parents in Innsbruck for a couple of days before my departure to Sochi. It was great to watch a few Olympic events together, including Britt Cox’s standout performance finishing fifth place in the women’s event. It was great to watch a few Olympic events together, including Britt Cox’s standout performance finishing fifth place in the women’s event.

The mountain is closed to the public, so up at the peak where there are no Olympic events, it is eerily quiet. I have never experienced anything quite like it, and don’t think I will again.

Yesterday’s training session was just myself and one of the ski cross coaches skiing grommets all to ourselves, literally no one about.

The ski cross course layout is similar to the World Cup race last year, just bigger in every aspect. Bigger jumps, bigger berms, bigger features. I was terrified and excited at the same time.

The adrenaline rush I get from skiing this course is huge. As soon as I had completed one run, I wanted to head straight back up for another.

The feeling of pushing yourself past your comfort zone and coming out on top is addictive, and probably why I love this sport. The most enjoyable aspect of the Games so far has been watching fellow Australian athletes compete in their events, either live in the stadium or back at the athlete lounge on TV.

The vibe is incredibly positive on this team, and it is contagious. Everyone is backing each other, and feeding off each other’s enthusiasm and excitement. I am very lucky to be a part of it.

The above text originally appeared on Katya’s blog:


My focus placed seventh in her event at the Sochi Winter Olympics, making her the equal most successful Australian skier cross athlete at a Winter Olympics.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>March Timetable</strong></td>
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<td><strong>RESOURCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT</strong></td>
<td><strong>WEDNESDAY 12 MARCH</strong></td>
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<td><strong>THEATRE A, ELIZABETH MURDOCH BUILDING</strong></td>
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<td>Reinventing growth without pollution: Can India find answers?</td>
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<td>By Ms Sunila Narain (Writer and environmentalist), Australia India Institute Lecture</td>
<td>Bookings: <a href="http://www.ai.unimelb.edu.au/">www.ai.unimelb.edu.au/</a></td>
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<td><strong>WEDNESDAY 13 MARCH</strong></td>
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<td><strong>THEATRE A, ELIZABETH MURDOCH BUILDING</strong></td>
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<td>China and India, a Pragmatic Approach to Solve Border Disputes</td>
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<td>By Dr Claudia Aistaria (Centre for Military and Strategic Studies, Rome), Australia India Institute Lecture</td>
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<td><strong>WEDNESDAY 19 MARCH</strong></td>
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<td>The minimisation of restrictive practices in health and social care settings: An International agenda for transforming care</td>
<td>By Professor Joy Duley (University of Central Lancashire), Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences Lecture</td>
<td>Bookings: <a href="http://alumni.online.unimelb.edu.au/joyduleylecture">http://alumni.online.unimelb.edu.au/joyduleylecture</a></td>
<td>Enquiries: <a href="mailto:jduleylec@unimelb.edu.au">jduleylec@unimelb.edu.au</a>, 8344 9800</td>
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<td><strong>THURSDAY 20 MARCH</strong></td>
<td><strong>6.45PM</strong></td>
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<td><strong>PUBLIC LECTURE THEATRE, OLD ARTS BUILDING</strong></td>
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<td>The Spirit of Inquiry: Discovery and Proof from Parmenides to the Present</td>
<td>By Professor James Wilkinson (Harvard University)</td>
<td>Arts Lecture</td>
<td>Bookings: <a href="http://alumni.online.unimelb.edu.au/jwilkinsonlecture">http://alumni.online.unimelb.edu.au/jwilkinsonlecture</a></td>
<td>Enquiries: <a href="mailto:jwilkinson@unimelb.edu.au">jwilkinson@unimelb.edu.au</a>, 8344 9855</td>
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<td><strong>THURSDAY 27 MARCH</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.30PM</strong></td>
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<td><strong>THEATER A, ELIZABETH MURDOCH BUILDING</strong></td>
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<td>Prospects for the pursuit of global justice</td>
<td>By Professor Tim McCormack (University of Melbourne), International House Lecture</td>
<td>Arts Lecture</td>
<td>Bookings: <a href="http://alumni.online.unimelb.edu.au/">http://alumni.online.unimelb.edu.au/</a> tmccormaklecture</td>
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<td>We Got it Right? Where to now?</td>
<td>By Professor Gerard Vaughan (University of Melbourne) and Mr Ray Tonkin (Heritage conservation practitioner, Newman College Lecture</td>
<td>Arts Lecture</td>
<td>Bookings: <a href="http://www.bybooking.com/76158">http://www.bybooking.com/76158</a></td>
<td>Enquiries: <a href="mailto:outreach@snac.unimelb.edu.au">outreach@snac.unimelb.edu.au</a>, 9342 1614</td>
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<td><strong>THURSDAY 27 MARCH</strong></td>
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<td><strong>LADY THEATRE, EASTERN ARTS BUILDING</strong></td>
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<td>Mosaics and Multiculturalism: Discoveries at Ancient Sapphorys</td>
<td>By Professor Carri Myers (C Duke University)</td>
<td>Arts Lecture</td>
<td>Bookings: <a href="http://alumni.online.unimelb.edu.au/cmeyerslecture">http://alumni.online.unimelb.edu.au/cmeyerslecture</a></td>
<td>Enquiries: <a href="mailto:ralshle.svdhavan@unimelb.edu.au">ralshle.svdhavan@unimelb.edu.au</a>, 8344 8504</td>
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**ART MUSEUM STUDY**

**WEDNESDAY 26 MARCH 4.45PM**

The Fitzwilliam Museum Cambridge; a case study in the evolution of the art museum.
By Mr Duncan Robinson (Fitzwilliam Museum), Arts Lecture
Bookings: http://alumni.online.unimelb.edu.au/duncanrobinson
Enquiries: tamir@unimelb.edu.au, 8344 8985
PUBLIC LECTURE THEATRE, OLD ARTS BUILDING

**THURSDAY 25 MARCH 5.30PM**
The Urban Development of Melbourne: Have We Got it Right? Where to Now? By Professor Gerard Vaughan (University of Melbourne) and Mr Ray Tonkin (Heritage conservation practitioner, Newman College Lecture
Bookings: http://www.bybooking.com/76158
Enquiries: outreach@snac.unimelb.edu.au, 9342 1614
JUNIOR COMMON ROOM, INTERNATIONAL HOUSE, 241 ROYAL PARADE, PARKVILLE

**WEDNESDAY 9 APRIL 6PM**

We got it Right? Where to now? By Professor Gerard Vaughan (University of Melbourne) and Mr Ray Tonkin (Heritage conservation practitioner, Newman College Lecture
Bookings: http://www.bybooking.com/76158
Enquiries: outreach@snac.unimelb.edu.au, 9342 1614
JUNIOR COMMON ROOM, INTERNATIONAL HOUSE, 241 ROYAL PARADE, PARKVILLE

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University of Melbourne at the 2014 Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show

With the onset of rapid climate change, increasing the use of green infrastructure and retaining water in cities can significantly reduce heat loads and stormwater run-off as well as improving city liveability.

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