Each year thousands of asylum seekers try to settle in Australia. Most are fleeing persecution because of their race, religion or lifestyle. They're looking for something simple yet sometimes elusive: a fresh start. Ryan Sheales reports on their struggles and triumphs.

Refugees, like 10 people in the town and for their own asylum seeker issue you'll probably gear about 10 different viewpoints. Some welcoming, some hostile, some confused, some somewhere in the middle. Refugees arriving in Australia often encounter a climate where their legitimacy is bitterly contested. Social researchers – like Melissa Phillips from the University of Melbourne School of Social and Political Sciences – see it as a problem across the whole of Australian society.

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From the Vice-Chancellor
An educational journey

I t is one month since the vice-chancellor of one of humanity’s great challenges, understanding our place and purpose. It is a period that marks the start of the University’s new academic year, a time when students return to campus and the city to begin national and global conversations around the central theme of ‘The Art and Science of Wellbeing’. It will focus on key health issues of concern to Australians.

As the University’s vice-chancellor, it is my privilege to see the wisdom and courage of the people of the land who have challenged and transformed ancient practices to preserve the most significant cultural heritage of the world. The extraordinary collection documented in the Warmun Art Centre exhibition, saved from the force of the flood but now restored to the Arnhem Aboriginal Artists as the flood recedes, has a profound importance. It is a manifestation of the treatment program, masters and students have restored around 200 pieces on campus and in the campus after some years, Mr Kimberley has observed.

The restored works will be returned to Warmun, preparing the works to be displayed in the new Warmun Art Centre. It is one of the country’s most significant community-owned collections, and the arts.
Researchers receive Australian Academy of Science honours

Two University of Melbourne researchers have received prestigious awards from the Australian Academy of Science.

By Nerissa Mannink

Each year the Australian Academy of Science presents prestigious awards to career researchers for life-long contributions to and sustainable early-career researchers in recognition of scientific achievement.

Professor Roger Powell FAA, from the School of Earth Sciences was recognised as the 2013 recipient of the Boardman Medal for his contributions to statistics (2013 Early Career Research award). Professor Powell was honoured for his work in understanding the role in the biology that makes up the Australian floristic macro-mammal's natural community, the role in the biological and environmental diversity and the role in the biological diversity of Australian ecosystems. His work has been characterised by innovative and creative thinking, and has led to significant contributions to our understanding of these ecosystems.

Professor Powell is also involved in a wide range of international collaborations with his network of colleagues nationally and internationally, research which he has developed over the past 30 years as a lead investigator in some of the University of Melbourne's major projects. He has also contributed to the development of new approaches to understanding the role of predators in shaping the structure and function of ecosystems.

The award is one of the 100 most prestigious awards in the world, and is given to researchers who have made significant contributions to Australian science and industry. It is the highest honour that can be given to a researcher in Australia, and is awarded by the Australian Academy of Science.

Congratulations to the class of 2013!

University of Melbourne welcomes our new students

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The growing need for sustainable transport and the ways in which government institutions produce barriers to its development is the focus of two new books resulting from research led by Professor Low with four Australian universities.

The second is from a research collaboration led by Professor Carey Curtis of Curtin University.

"Electric car charging in Amsterdam. Photo: Ludovic Hurliman, Wikimedia Commons."
In Brief

Poor evaluations undermining public policy

Governments are making decisions based on incomplete information and evidence that’s often not adequate, a policy brief prepared for The University of Melbourne has warned. Professor Deborah Cobb-Clark — from the University’s Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research — has co-authored the quality of policy evaluation commissioned by the Commonwealth and state governments.

“Seemingly insignificant amounts of money, for instance, can mean something important to someone who may benefit most,” she said.

The report is the first of the Melbourne Institute’s new policy brief series that focuses on current policy, independent of past or future public debate.

“The results of these evaluations are typically not independent, transparent or widely distributed,” according to Professor Cobb-Clark.

“Ultimately, the results of such evaluations on economic and social policy evaluations are often wasted when they do not suit politicians or policy makers. That work needs to know what works and what does not,” Professor Cobb-Clark is calling for all policy evaluations to be made public as a matter of course.

“All evaluations conducted by or commissioned through the government should be published externally, perhaps with a short embargo period for journalists and stakeholders to consider the findings,” she recommends.

“The current lack of a willingness to commit to the publication of results has meant that Australian academics are increasingly divorced from evaluations of major economic and social initiatives, which can lead to poor policy.”

Better bones and how to keep them

Once thought to be a last resort for the elderly, osteoporosis is increasingly becoming a condition that affects all ages. As influenza spreads during the northern winter, Dr Linda Wakim and her colleagues in the Departments of Microbiology and Immunology, and the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, believe they have a new clue as to why some people have more resistant T-cells able to provide the greatest protection, for longer.

“T-cells and not others express this protective molecule. Dr Wakim says researchers are currently trying to understand why some are more resistant than others and how we can harness this mechanism to help the body combat infection.”

Australians need to do more to maintain healthy bones for a lifetime, a University of Melbourne study has found.

The study, Building healthy bones throughout life: a population-based prevention strategy throughout the life-cycle to prevent osteoporosis, was published recently in the Medical Journal of Australia and outlined key areas that need to be identified and addressed in future strategies on identifying bone health issues.

“Both general practitioners and their patients often overlook bone health and as a result, osteoporosis is often identified only when fractures occur. A forthcoming approach to building and maintaining a healthy skeleton is paramount,” it states.

Building healthy bones throughout life is essential for adults to increase and maintain bone mass and density throughout life.

Up to one third of all adults have low bone density and teenagers are most at risk of not meeting daily calcium requirements, which is most likely due to the calcium void made by soft drinks, pregnant women and dorthromenol need additional vitamin D.

It is estimated that up to 1.2 million Australians have osteoporosis and 63 million have low bone density.

New findings into conquering influenza

Researchers from the University of Melbourne and the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute (WEHI) have discovered a new protein that protects against infection.

While influenza spreads during the northern winter, Dr Linda Wakim and her colleagues in the Departments of Microbiology and Immunology, and the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, believe they have a new clue as to why some people have more resistant T-cells able to provide the greatest protection, for longer.

“T-cells detect cells infected with viruses and initiate inflammation,” Dr Wakim says. “Our lab has been investigating the ‘defensive devices’ contained within the T-cells that are located on exposed body surfaces such as skin and mucosal surfaces to ward off infection. T-cells do not interact with viruses and kill them before the virus can reproduce within the infected cell and spread to other cells.”

Researchers found these cells contain the protein RTIMU and this leads them more resistant to viral infections such as influenza. The findings have implications for the development of new vaccines.

“We hope to know how the number and longevity of T-cells expressing RTIMU, this could include mutated vaccines that promote the growth of these ‘defensive device’ T-cells,” Dr Wakim adds.

Theresa Chen, a PhD student currently trying to understand why some T-cells and not others express this protective molecule.

“Theresa probably encounters some harm of chemical signal (a cytokine, or growth factor) that is released during an infection. This signal is then received by the T-cell and triggers it to express RTIMU,” Dr Chen says.

“The lab is currently investigating the exact mechanism under which RTIMU is expressed within T-cells and the role of T-cells in the war against influenza.”

“Many more people are coming forward to get vaccinated,” Dr Chen adds. “It is an exciting time to be a part of the influenza research, and we hope to understand more about the mechanisms we are investigating.”

A year in the life of a young Australian

Marita Cheng has completed a whirlwind year as Young Australian of the Year. She reflects on her experiences and what is coming up next.

More than a decade ago, in the middle of the financial crisis, a young 24-year-old named Marita Cheng took a bold step and launched a not-for-profit organisation.

“Robogals was my final-year project,” Marita said. “As a Bachelor of Science and Commerce student, I had the opportunity to run with my ideas and see where they would lead.”

In late January 2012, I arrived in China for two months, visiting a number of cities to promote the message of gender equality, share my story and passion for engineering and encourage many more school students to consider engineering as a career choice.

“From being inspired by candidate Obama during the 2008 election to then attending his historic First Inauguration in 2009 as part of another anchor. We have always been thrilled by the President and the complicated political process that surrounds him. Particularly as they serve as such a strong contrast to the Australian civic experience. While we continually bemoan the lack of political debate and those who contest it in the United States, especially heading into the President’s second term, the big issues are at stake: national gun control, immigration and, strangely, climate change, as the President, etc., enumerated in his Inaugural Address.”

As I left Washington reflecting upon the history of having attended both of Barack Obama’s Inaugurations I was struck by the limitless capacity for the people of the United States to achieve great things on an immense scale when differences are put aside and common ground is built upon.

“Through such a process Barack Obama and Robogals have both sought to achieve in all walk of life.”

www.inauguralchore.org/collegealumni

Follow On Twitter www.twitter.com/CSUNeibaer

Commercial and Politics student Christopher Weinberg recently attended the Collegiate President Inaugural Conference in Washington DC. He reflects on witnessing President Obama’s inauguration for the second time. He was there also in 2009.

Dr Weinberg says that seeing the Inauguration of the President was one of the most moving experiences of his life.

“It was something undeniably grand about the American political process. It was a testament to how the nation’s founding fathers may have intended the system to be run. The idea of the people coming together, across political divides to celebrate the solemn power of the democratic process. And while such unity may only be really felt in the historic context of such moments, it is a powerful reminder of the kind of government that I believe we are still being blessed with today.”

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Documenting a recent war

When New York poet Barry Adamson was in his 20s, to write a list of common words heard in 1990s movies, he spotted the name of Al Qaeda. He stopped counting at 35, others raced up to 75 names.

Soon after, Al-Baz read that American soldiers arrested a爆料er in a car and interrogated him. The soldier had accused his colleagues killed during their conflict. By definition, Al-Baz said, Al Qaeda had become a terrorist organization.

That war informs Al The Way Through Evening, the latest documentary by Melbourne filmmaker, Rohan Spong. Mr Spong says he came across the subject while promoting another feature work. "I was in New York City, assembling another project and I googled some rare piano music," he says. "One of the first people who appeared in my search of recent performances was Al-Baz."

Mr Al-Baz is a former priest, who served as a writer for the Al Jazeera English news channel, and is known as the war correspondent for the BBC.

"I was very moved by his story," Mr Spong says. "I used to watch Al Jazeera when I was in high school and he always stood out."

It was this story that motivated Mr Spong to tell the story of aioleta's story, one of the few survivors of the 1991 admission of the al Qaeda 1991 attacks on New York City.

"The film is an attempt to tell the story of how Al Qaeda grew from a small cell to the largest killer of men aged 25-44," Mr Spong says. "It's a story of how a group of young men came to be involved in a global terrorist network."
Sustainability on the big screen

Nerissa Hannink previews a film festival supported by the University of Melbourne’s Sustainable Society Institute that explores solutions to living sustainably in a post-carbon economy.

T
day, the University of Melbourne Sustainable Society Institute (MSRI) is proudly supporting the second annual Transitions Film Festival – Australia’s largest solutions-focused sustainability film festival.

The festival will include films and discussions covering a broad range of key themes including international energy futures, agricultural innovation, sustainable tourism, urban living, indigenous economies and global community.

Professor John Wiseman from MSRI says that the festival aims to be an interactive event, inspiring public discussion through films.

“Transitions Film Festival is a visionary program showcasing groundbreaking films that are positive, solutions-focused and inspirational,” Mr. Wiseman says.

One of the films the festival includes is ‘Promised Land’ starring Matt Damon. The film is the result of a research project run by the University’s Sustainable Society Institute lead by Professor Anna Rose.

Professor Wiseman and Dave Houston from ‘Look out the Gate Albany’ which runs awareness about coal seam gas mining will be hosting the opening screening of Matt Damon’s ‘Promised Land’ – a rare feature narrative about fracking, directed by Gus Van Sant.

“The visionary thinking shared through these stories helps us to gain a much greater perspective of the age of transformation we are living through. The global shifts we are experiencing in economic, technology, and social systems are not things to be feared, but can be catalysts for a larger transition to a more sustainable and equitable future for all.”

As festival patron Anna Rose says; translation has many elements: from fossil fuels to renewable energy, from greed to empathy and compassion; from short term thinking to long-term planning; from shopping life to collaborative consumption. Powerful stories, told through film, can change hearts and minds in a deeper way than any set of statistics, no matter how shocking.”

Festival Chair, Dr. Tim Lacey says the festival will run over 15-19 February at Federation Square, ACMI and Cinema Nova. It showcases its national premieres, 15 feature films and runs in association with Melbourne’s largest sustainability film festival, Australia’s largest sustainable film festival – www.transitionsfilmfestival.com/.

“We’ll also be drawing on the Leonhard Adam Collection of International Indigenous Culture, the best ones are those who understand the power of film to connect with, and explore the often subtle differences encountered in the traditional training ground of amateur theatre. ‘Graduates know the love and passion that drive them; and that at the end of a course of study they have a personal responsibility to keep going and never stop learning,’ Ms Little says.”

MR Scholten stresses that when actors are preparing for an audition they should familiarise themselves with the script and rehearsal.

“It’s a unique opportunity to get a taste of what life as a VCA student,” Ms Little says. More information:

www.vca.unimelb.edu.au/performingarts/shortcourses, vcaperformingarts@unimelb.edu.au

+61 3 9035 9220

Music for the people

The Sidney Myer Free Concerts bring great classics and great artists together during Melbourne’s summer season of outdoor music at the Sidney Myer Music Bowl.

Festival Flurries:

Festive Flurries

Program Details:

Venue: The Melbourne Recital Centre

Free admission

Exhibition on until 24 February

A remarkably diverse ensemble of over 100 culturally significant and aesthetically striking objects from the indigenous cultures of North America, Africa, Oceania, Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia, Asia, and Oceania.

VENUE: THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

Footprint, Melbourne, Wednesday 13 February, 7pm

Saturday 16 February, 7pm

Wednesday 20 February, 7pm

Saturday 23 February, 7pm

Gates open from 6pm

Program Details:

www.mrcsa.com.au

Visiting Neighbours in Summer Bay?

Drop by the VCA first

Roles in TV soap-operas have launched the careers of many prominent Australian actors. A short course in acting for soap at the VCA has proven very popular over summer. By Ryan Sheales.

A 1939 Sidney Myer established a trust fund at the University of Melbourne to provide a permanent series of free concerts for the public. Originally given under the direction of the University’s Oirmond Professor of Music, today these concerts are given by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. The University’s long-standing tradition of musical excellence is highlighted through the talent of the performers including internationally renowned musicians and ensembles who have conducted two of the forthcoming Sidney Myer concerts.

Leopold Stokowski, also a University alumnus, will open from Mozart’s ‘Clemenza di Tito’, and one of Australia’s leading composers, Ronald Hummel, is featured with a performance of his work

The Leonard Adam Collection of International Indigenous Culture

Free admission
Getting the goodness out of culture

An insider’s view into the visual art culture of the Bard/Laivi people of the West Kimberley forms the research component in a Masters of Fine Art Degree for Indigenous artist Ngardarb Riches by Rebecca Hobden.

“Ngardarb is a visual artist with a passion for botany. In her work, she integrates Indigenous knowledge about plant life with contemporary aesthetic experimentation,” Hobden said.

For Hobden, Riches’ work is a testament to her commitment to healing and reconnecting with her cultural heritage.

Riches’ project, Ilgnaam, or Poison Root, is an exhibition at the Wilin Centre, where Hobden is conducting her research. Ilgnaam explores the relationship between Indigenous knowledge and contemporary art, and how these two worlds can exist in harmony.

Riches’ work is characterized by a strong connection to her ancestral roots and a deep understanding of the natural world. Her art is a reflection of her cultural heritage, a way of reconnecting with her ancestors and their stories.

Riches’ work is also a form of cultural preservation. By creating art that is rooted in Indigenous knowledge, Riches is helping to keep this knowledge alive and relevant in the modern world.

Riches’ work is recognized for its innovative approach to art and its commitment to cultural preservation. Her work has been exhibited in various galleries and festivals around the world, and has received critical acclaim.

Riches’ work is also noteworthy for its use of traditional materials and techniques. She uses natural materials such as mud and clay to create her artwork, which adds a unique element to her work.

Riches’ work is an example of how art can be used as a tool for cultural preservation and healing. By reconnecting with her cultural heritage, Riches is helping to keep Indigenous knowledge alive and relevant.

Riches’ work is an inspiration to others who are interested in cultural preservation and art. Her work demonstrates the power of art to heal and reconnect people with their cultural heritage.

Riches’ work is a testament to the power of art and culture to heal and reconnect people with their roots.

Riches’ work is a call to action for others to reconnect with their cultural heritage and to use art as a tool for cultural preservation.

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Skiing through summer

While the rest of us in Australia sweat through hot summer days, two University of Melbourne students are keeping cool – and winning rave reviews – on the northern hemisphere World Cup ski circuit.

by David Scott

Skiing isn’t the first sport that comes to mind when thinking about favourite summer activities. But cross-country skiers Katya Crema and Anton Grimus, they wouldn’t want to do anything else.

“I haven’t had a full Australian summer since I was 11, so it is definitely a little foreign to me,” says Mr Grimus. “I try to make the most of my bike and surf board when I’m back.”

Both skiers have based themselves in Europe and North America for the duration of the 2012-13 cross-country ski season, testing themselves on mountains across Canada, the USA, France, Italy, Russia and the Czech Republic.

For Ms Crema, who is a veteran of the University of Melbourne’s winter sports program for 11 years, her home is cross-country skiing, “I’ve been competing on the World Cup circuit for five years. It was an interesting transition from Alpine skiing in the first year. I went from skiing individual time trials up and down a course, to racing at a time over massive jumps, rolls and bumps. The courses on the World Cup are large, technical and sometimes pretty scary. But it’s worth all the effort.”

Anton Grimus has also tasted success this season.

“The biggest highlight has been my first podium result, placing third in the Nadoli World Cup even in early December. It’s been my best start to a season yet, and hopefully I can keep going for the rest of the season.”

“His is my third season on the World Cup circuit. It’s got the best competitions from every nation, making the competition competitive and intense at every stop. No matter who you are racing against, it’s always challenging to compete against the rest of the world.”

Both skiers are in agreement that their leg-up during their first year at university has made all the difference. "I can skip certain introductory subjects and jump straight into the deep end,” says Mr Grimus. "It was actually surprising of how little the program concentrated on my year 12 studies. It was refreshing to focus on new concepts in my university courses."

Both skiers also studied mathematics in the extension program and will begin a Bachelor of Science as a Chancellor’s Scholar at the University this year.

Ms Crema was "absolutely stoked" when she received the offer and chose to study science and mathematics, being "very excited to keep things moving along" and start off her studies at the University.

“Being a Chancellor’s Scholar guarantees me a placement into a post-graduate course of my choice, and having a secure position down the road is a fantastic and stress-free feeling,” he says. "I would like to be a partner in an engineering consultancy firm focusing on providing solutions to water management problems. I think water issues are likely to become more prominent in the future,” he says.

Research is also an important part of her future goals. "I hope to one day team up with institutions including the Australian Centre for Resources Research at the University of Melbourne."

A 2012 study indicated that when students collaborate on water research, it helped them develop strong industry work together on this issue, the research highlighted. Mr Grimus said he has always maintained access to students in the environment and science since she finished her undergraduate studies at Melbourne University, which included completing a Bachelor of Science and a Bachelor of Science in Physical and Applied Maths.

“I didn’t study engineering as an undergraduate degree, but I do have a good grounding in physics and maths from my studies in the environment and science since I finished my undergraduate studies at Melbourne University, which included completing a Bachelor of Science and a Bachelor of Science in Physical and Applied Maths.”

Both skiers are also studying a Diploma of Modern Languages in Spanish and continue to balance their studies with the love of language in their free time. Ms Crema, who is graduating, sent her way to China to teach English full-time and learn Chinese part-time.

‘‘First ever’’

While Mr Grimus said he has already managed to graduate with a Bachelor of Engineering while competing over recent years, Ms Crema has only started doing a Masters of Property. "It’s a great experience.”

While both athletes agree the northern hemisphere provides some great skiing conditions, “The variety of terrain and amount of snow just does not compare to Australian skiing,” says Ms Crema. “It’s been my best start to a season yet, and hopefully I can keep going for the rest of the season.”

"At present we are in the very early days of discussions about the viability of other extension Program subjects in more accessible ways so that students from regional areas can participate for example, where we have been able to work with local and regional teachers to design, trial and evaluate different teaching and social environments."

"We have extended your knowledge of your chosen subject area, and have adopted well established training methods, new pedagogical models and social and physical, emotional and mental environments for students who see it as a valuable opportunity for further study."

"I would encourage them, they have nothing to lose. You might meet a lot of new people, you could gain work experience, you could get your head around some of the new things. The practicals were something I looked forward to,” she says.

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Events

VICTORIAN COLLEGE OF THE ARTS SHORT COURSES

For University maps and locations visit: unimelb.edu.au/campuses/maps.html

For more information visit: vet.unimelb.edu.au/openday

VETERINARY SCIENCE & HOSPITAL OPEN DAY

Sunday 17 March 2013 250 Princes Hwy, Werribee 10am – 3pm

Stop behind the scenes of our class-

Veternary Hospital.

Our annual Open Day is for the wider community and prospective students to tour our outstanding facilities and find out about all the important services we provide.

Discover an exciting range of animals, attend public lectures, course lectures, interactive displays and impressive demonstrations.

Speak to veterinary staff, current students or members of special interest groups.

For University maps and locations visit: unimelb.edu.au/campuses/maps.html