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FIRE MANAGEMENT
A DIVISIVE ISSUE

I concur with the argument by Mark Adams ("Too hot to handle", SAM October 2013) that the only way to protect large assets from wildfire is to eliminate the fine fuel on the floor of the adjacent woodland/forest. It is the build-up of fine fuel on the forest floor and ladder fuel hanging from the trees that carries the fire to the crown of the forest canopy, causing an exponential increase in the magnitude of the fire.

As a landholder in north-eastern Victoria and fire-fighter with the Country Fire Authority since 1975, I can attest to the dramatic increase in frequency and magnitude of wild fires in our region during the last decade.

Instead of radical back-burning during a fire fight it is less damaging to have a controlled low intensity fire in the cooler months to eliminate the fine fuels adjacent to assets. The other consideration is to assess and relocate inappropriate housing developments in undefendable locations unless the structures can be constructed to resist extreme fire impact and protect those inside from annihilation.

Fuel reduction to protect assets, whether they are suburbs or national parks, will require public support and a large professionally trained cohort of fire fighters. It will cause issues with air quality – and it will cost the taxpayer/ratepayer – but we must choose whether we want to be managers, or victims of wildfire and climate change.

Edward Minty
(BSc ’73 DipEd ’74 MSc ’90)
Huon Vic

Mark Adams’ argument is just too simplistic. He appears to treat all vegetation in Australia as requiring the same treatment and apparently ignores the mounting evidence that the more fires vegetation is exposed to, the more fire-prone it becomes.

There is also mounting concern as to the efficacy of fuel reduction over large areas. The cost of ‘windows’ for such action to ensure such fires do not escape can be enormous – not just financial but for the impact on flora and fauna.

Fuel burnt today may help to reduce a fire but there is plenty of evidence to show that it may not be the case. In any case, fuel in some vegetation builds up to ‘dangerous’ levels within three to five years and if the area is burnt again there will be a loss of some plant species and the effect on fauna may be dramatic.

Fuel does not continue to build up in volume. CSIRO has shown that even in dry forests, fuel levels out within 12 to 15 years. Their studies also show that there is a loss of nitrogen and phosphorous in the soil and replacement takes many years.

Nowhere has the subject of planning been mentioned. If people live in or beside the bush, then they must accept the threat of fire. But governments, local and state, could regulate where settlements are made.

James Tedder (BEC ’51)
Grassy Head NSW

REMEMBRANCE OF PHILOSOPHY PAST

I was thrilled to see a photo of brother and sister Gillian Leahy and Terry Leahy and to read the interesting article “Lights, camera, Zimbabwe” (SAM October 2013).

I remember halcyon days with philosophy teacher Bill Bonney in the upstairs tower corner of the quadrangle when Terry, Gillian and I discussed Immanuel Kant over cocoa. The article brought back memories of an introduction to causality in the work of David Hume and the elements of Hobbes’ thought as expounded by Professors David Armstrong and David Stove.

My friendship with Gillian and Terry dated to happy evenings in the late 1960s at the Balgowlah home of MLA Douglas Darby when his public speaking influenced many of us, including the young senator-to-be Chris Puplick. My years at the Sydney Law School, with such marvellous teachers as Professor Alice Tay, Professor Benjafeld and Jane Swanston, helped me apply principles of logic acquired in Philosophy to an understanding of how the law works in society.

Sally Gaunt (BA ’72 LLB ’76)
Perth WA

DEFENCE OF PIGEONS RESTORES FAITH

This is a note of appreciation to Eva Tang for her letter “Bird Rights and Wrongs” (SAM, Letters, October 2013). Thank God somebody stepped up to write in defence of that poor pigeon caught in the freshly cleaned organ pipes in the Great Hall. Her article helped me to regain a little faith in the world.

The pigeon’s contribution to the welfare of mankind has been magnificent, to say the least. ‘Lest we forget’ is the phrase we use in memory of those who died during both world wars so we may
Each print edition of SAM now has an iPad version (which is free), with an exciting array of extra features – photos, video, audio and more – for you to download and consume at your leisure.

HOW TO ACCESS THE iPad EDITION

1. SAM for iPad can be downloaded from the App Store. Search for SAM (Sydney Alumni Magazine).

2. It is best to be connected to wi-fi Internet, however SAM for iPad can be downloaded over 3G.

3. Once SAM for iPad has finished downloading, open the app from the Newsstand.

4. The final step is to download the March issue by tapping the cover’s icon.

EXCLUSIVE iPad CONTENT FOR MARCH

Each iPad edition of SAM will feature exclusive content. In the March edition, we present:

> VIDEO Amanda Salis outlines what you can eat during a day on an extreme diet

> VIDEO Greg Chamitoff reflects on his boyhood dream of becoming an astronaut

> AUDIO/PHOTOS Brooke Roberts’ new collection of knitwear inspired by radiography scans

> PHOTOS Harriet Pratten’s photos of South African icons

> VIDEO Julia Horne salutes the 50th anniversary of her father Donald’s book, The Lucky Country

We hope you enjoy SAM for iPad, and encourage you to tell us about your iPad experience. Let us know what you think at alumni.office@sydney.edu.au or the App Store.

Michael Visontay
Editor

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EXCLUSIVE CCE OFFER FOR ALUMNI

GAIN NEW INSIGHTS AND DISCOVER YOUR UNTAPPED CREATIVITY WITH A CCE SHORT COURSE

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For more information on our range of courses, head to sydney.edu.au/cce

* Offer is subject to review
Centre to change people’s lives

As a large and diverse institution with a broad range of disciplines and a strong shared identity, the University of Sydney is the perfect place for such a project. At the heart of our strategy is our common purpose to create and sustain a university in which, for the benefit of both Australia and the wider world, the brightest researchers and the most promising students can thrive and realise their full potential.

Huge possibilities for innovation are opening up as we break down the barriers between faculties and disciplines, remembering what it means to be a University, and investing in multidisciplinary collaborations on a significant scale.

Of course, it has taken more than a Picasso to make this vision a reality. The unique research opportunities created by the Charles Perkins Centre have inspired many organisations and philanthropists to make a substantial contribution towards its work.

This includes a $5 million donation from the Australian Diabetes Council to establish a chair in diabetes to lead research alongside professional, industry and government bodies in the area of diabetes prevention and treatment; the Francis Henry Loxton bequest, which provides annual income to the University for research projects and scholarships in diabetes prevention and treatment; and the Charles Perkins Centre have inspired many organisations and philanthropists to make a substantial contribution towards its work.

It includes a $5 million donation from the Australian Diabetes Council to establish a chair in diabetes to lead research alongside professional, industry and government bodies in the area of diabetes prevention and treatment; the Francis Henry Loxton bequest, which provides annual income to the University for research projects and scholarships in the faculties of Engineering, Agriculture and Environment, and Veterinary Science; and a $4 million gift from Janet Dora Hine, an alumna, to examine the impact of politics, governance and ethics in managing diabetes, obesity and cardiovascular disease.

More recently, we used a $2 million donation from Judith and David Coffey to establish a world-first research hub within the Charles Perkins Centre. The Judith and David Coffey Life Lab is a unique training environment at the intersection of the life, social, economic, and physical sciences.

In David’s words, “We chose the University of Sydney because it is a community of unorthodox thinkers and brilliant analytical minds. As an alumnus of the university, I have seen firsthand what graduates are capable of, given the chance. I want to support the discovery of new approaches to problem-solving and we believe the Charles Perkins Centre is best positioned to take on the challenge.”

The Charles Perkins Centre is a striking piece of architecture itself, and it will become home to some remarkable discoveries. To quote my colleague, and Academic Director of the centre, Professor Steve Simpson: “To challenge societal norms, to improve world health, is about as big as it can get when you’re an academic researcher.”

The Charles Perkins Centre represents a new concept in how the university will remain a venue for world-class research. It is also the first of many new buildings that will transform and reinvigorate the campus of the University of Sydney. Others include the new School of Business in the Abercrombie precinct, and the Australian Institute for Nanoscience.

It will be 50 years ago next year that Charles Perkins, while studying for a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Sydney, organised a group of 30 students to travel to Walgett, Moree, Bowraville and Kempsey to protest against discrimination and poor living conditions in these communities.

Charles was a man who ignored traditional limitations, and worked across boundaries to create new partnerships, new opportunities, and new ideas to change the way Australians view themselves. This will be the hallmark, and the impact, of the teaching and research centre that carries his name as it works to ‘change the lives of many people.’

WORDS DR MICHAEL SPENCE, VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRINCIPAL PHOTOGRAPHY BRENDAN ESPOSITO
After much deliberation, SAM is pleased to announce the winners of its inaugural travel photo competition. The judges were overwhelmed by the range, quality and sophistication of the entries. Finally, we can announce winners.

**FIRST PRIZE**
(Macbook Pro laptop)
Carolyn Watson, Figtree NSW – Woman at Moroccan gun rampart
“This is the strongest image by a long shot – had all the qualities of a great photo – was unexpected, formally very compelling, and also quite ambiguous, playing with our sense of expectation about what might be taking place.”
Professor Merilyn Fairskye, Associate Professor in Photomedia.

**RUNNERS-UP (iPad)**
David Jackson, Marrickville, NSW – Luxembourg Gardens, Paris
Paul Bonitcha, Woolwich, NSW – Penguin on one foot

**PEOPLE’S CHOICE**
(iPod touch)
Alison Tong, Westmead, NSW – Polar bear kiss

**HIGHLY COMMENDED**
(iPod touch)
Jane Fraser – Moroccan donkeys

For a gallery of the winners and top 40 images, go to: http://sydney.edu.au/alumni/photo-comp/

SAM wishes to thank all alumni who entered. Watch this space for more competitions.

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**AUSTRALIA DAY HONOURS**

University alumni were strongly represented in the Australia Day Honours, announced in January. The list of 71 recipients included one Companion (AC), 14 Officers (AO), 27 Members (AM) and 25 Medals of the Order of Australia (OAM).

The AC was awarded to Professor Bruce McKellar (BSc ’62 PhD ’66) for “eminent service to science, particularly the study of theoretical physics, as an academic, educator and researcher through seminal contributions to scientific development organisations and as an author and mentor”.

Notable recipients of the AO include Dr John Grill (BSc ’66 BE ’68 DEng ’10) for “distinguished service to engineering, to business, the minerals, energy and power supply industries, and as supporter of advanced education and training”. In 2012 he donated a personal gift of $20 million to the University to establish the new John Grill Centre for Project Leadership.

Other recipients of the AO include Professor David Celermajer (MBBS ’84 DSc ’06) for “distinguished service to medicine in the field of cardiology, as a clinician and researcher, to improve medical diagnostic methods, and to the promotion of heart health, particularly in children and young adults”, Emeritus Professor Tony Blackshield (LLB ’60 LLM ’69) for “distinguished service to the law as an academic, to legal education and scholarship, and as an author and commentator”; Louise Cox (BArch ’63 DipTCPlan ’71) for “distinguished service to architecture as a practitioner, through executive roles with international professional organisations, and to architectural education and heritage conservation”; and Professor David Throsby (BSc Agr ’60 MAgr ’63) for “distinguished service to the community as a leading cultural economist, to the promotion and preservation of Australian arts and heritage, and to tertiary education”.

Recipients of the AM include: former politician John Brogden (MPA ’01) for “significant service to the community through representational roles with social welfare organisations, particularly Lifeline, to the business and financial sectors, and to the Parliament of NSW”; Dr Brenton Broadstock (GradDipMusComp ’82) “for significant service to music as a composer, educator and mentor”; Narelle Kennedy (BSocStud ’75) for “significant service to business in Australia through a range of policy development and advisory roles”, and Margaret Rodgers (BA ’72 BD ’78) for “significant service to the Anglican Church of Australia through governance and representational roles, and to ecumenical affairs”.

Recipients of the OAM include Lyndey Milan (BA ’75 DipEd ’76) for “service to hospitality, particularly the food and wine industry, and to the community”, kayaker Murray Stewart (BDesArch ’09 MArch ’12) for “service to sport”. Stewart was part of the Men’s Kayak K4 Gold medal winning team at the 2012 London Olympics, and Susan Cleary (BA ’75 DipLangStud ’03) for “service to civil liberties advocacy, and to the Glebe community”.

**FULL AUSTRALIA DAY HONOURS LIST:**
http://sydney.edu.au/news
To mark the eve of the centenary of the First World War, Sydney Festival presented *Black Diggers*, a play that uncovers the contribution of First World War Aboriginal Diggers, following their exceptional stories from their homelands to the battlefields of Gallipoli, Palestine and Flanders.

Drawing upon new research and extensive consultation, the play features nine men representing the Aboriginal diggers who fought for Australia during the First World War. Dr David Williams, an Honorary Associate at the University and researcher for the production, says 450,000 Australians enlisted for WWI and of those, 1000 were Aboriginal.

“This figure is significant because we have actively forgotten their service,” says Williams. “We have had a lot of difficulty trying to locate their names, documents, photos and family stories. We wanted to find out about their life before the war, during the war and after the war.”

The play’s director, Wesley Enoch, says that in the centenary year of the anniversary of the First World War, it is no accident that the first major public project is about indigenous soldiers.

Dr Williams says: “We hope it provokes the desire for everyone who sees it to find out more because these stories deserve remembering.”

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**ALUMNI AWARD NOMINATIONS**

Nominations are now open for the 2014 Alumni Awards, which provide an opportunity to recognise the outstanding achievements of Sydney alumni. The recipients of these awards are people whose achievements are of the highest calibre. They are divided into two categories:

**Alumni Achievement Awards for graduates already established in their careers** recognise your colleagues who have made contributions in the areas of community service, international and professional achievement, or achievement by alumni under 30 years of age.

**Graduate Medals**, which recognise younger achievers who in the previous year graduated or completed their degree requirements. These six awards recognise achievements by undergraduate, masters by coursework, PhD, international, Indigenous and sporting students.

The awards will be presented at the Alumni Awards presentation on Friday 17 October. Nominations must be received by close of business Thursday 24 April 2014. sydney.edu.au/alumni/awards

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**YOUR FAVOURITE TEACHERS**

All alumni can remember the time they chose a subject that was brought alive by an inspirational teacher. Now SAM invites alumni to nominate their favourite lecturer, teacher or supervisor from their university days and send in a short description of what made that teacher so special, and their impact on you.

Later this year, the magazine will publish a special feature that salutes and celebrates the teachers who inspired you and helped transform your horizons and lives.

Please send your nominations, together with brief description (maximum 150 words), with the words FAVOURITE TEACHER on the header line, to: alumni.office@sydney.edu.au

We look forward to seeing your submissions.

Michael Visontay, Editor

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**THANKS TO TRACEY BECK**

On behalf of all alumni, SAM would like to thank Tracey Beck for her dedication and commitment as Director of Alumni Relations and Events over the past nine years. Tracey has left the University to pursue other opportunities. The Vice-Chancellor, Dr Michael Spence paid this tribute: “Tracey has made an outstanding contribution during her time with us. I would like to thank her for her leadership of the University’s engagement with alumni, the professionalisation of our events program, and her support of the Alumni Council. Tracey’s unfailing professionalism and almost boundless energy will be missed by colleagues and friends of the University alike. We wish her all the best for her future endeavours.”
As I write, it is almost a year to the day since Senate elected me as the University’s 18th Chancellor. As an alumna returning home, I have relished the opportunity to rediscover our University. As this edition of SAM shows once again, this is a place where big ideas are part of daily life, and lead to extraordinary outcomes.

Our University makes things happen, and, as alumni, we can take great pride in the achievements of our alma mater. As Chancellor, I assure you on behalf of Senate that we can look forward to an exciting future. As we move beyond the midpoint of the University’s 2011–15 Strategic Plan, we will start to see some of the hard work of recent years have a very visible impact.

At the time of writing, we were making final preparations to open the Charles Perkins Centre building to researchers and students. This is a remarkable facility that will bring some of the University’s finest minds together with star new recruits to deliver innovative solutions to the problems caused by obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease. It will also offer cross-disciplinary teaching programs (see page 12).

We are also making great progress on two other transformative projects, the Australian Institute for Nanoscience and the Abercrombie Precinct. The latter will provide a much-needed single location for our Business School, new study facilities and 200 student beds on the Darlington Campus. Our wider student accommodation strategy is really starting to bear fruit following our purchase of the Queen Mary building. We are now converting the former nurses’ residence to deliver 800 beds for domestic and international students – a major breakthrough in addressing the crisis in affordable student accommodation.

The Nanoscience, Abercrombie and Queen Mary developments are due to open for academics and students during 2015, by which stage we hope to be well advanced with our proposed Campus Improvement Program (CIP). This exciting seven-year vision, approved by Senate and recently lodged as a State Significant Development application with the NSW Government, considers how we can continue creating a world-class integrated environment that meets the research, educational, cultural and recreational needs of those who work and study here, and live in the surrounding community.

The opening of the Charles Perkins Centre hub is the first important step in changing how our campus infrastructure supports the University’s staff and students. However, the new building does not simply represent the University’s single largest investment in new infrastructure since the 1850s, it also exemplifies how the University is making it easier for researchers and students to...
reach across ‘traditional’ disciplinary boundaries to tackle problems facing the modern world.

One area of focus for 2014 will be taking forward the recommendations from last year’s final report of the University’s Health and Medical Research Strategic Review. This suggested how we might maximise the impact of our considerable strengths in health and medical research across different faculties so that researchers and students in those disciplines continue to rank among the world’s best, and so that we can increase the impact of their work in the communities we serve.

This is an ambitious agenda, and we are pursuing it in a challenging external environment. The ever-fluctuating global economy, changing technologies and increased competition within Australia and internationally are just some of the key challenges we face.

I look forward to keeping you updated during the year on the work of Senate and our progress. Senate represents all of the University’s communities, and I value the input of the four new alumni Fellows you elected late last year, joining the re-elected Peter FitzSimons:

- **Verity Firth** (BA ’97 LLB ’99), CEO of the Public Education Foundation, an advocacy organisation providing scholarships for students in need of financial assistance
- **Dr Catriona Menzies-Pike** (BA ’00 PhD ’06), Arts Editor of The Conversation online media site
- **Kate McClymont** (BA ’81), a senior investigative journalist at *The Sydney Morning Herald*
- **Andrew West** (BA ’92), presenter of the Religion and Ethics Report on the ABC.

They join many alumni in providing deeply appreciated guidance of our University’s future direction. With the benefit of the experience of my first 12 months as Chancellor, I can say with confidence that there’s never been a better time to get involved.

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**SIR ZELMAN COWEN UNIVERSITIES FUND**

**GRANT FOR NOVEL APPROACHES TO THERAPY IN ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE**

**CALL FOR APPLICATIONS**

**Closing Date: Friday 11 April 2014**

The Sir Zelman Cowen Universities Fund is a Sydney trust funding medical and scientific research and promoting co-operative work between the University of Sydney and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Having previously funded a number of grant programs in the field of Alzheimer’s Disease (AD) research, the Fund now calls for applications for funding from scientists working on novel approaches to therapy for AD.

Applications should be made according to guidelines set out below:

- The Grant will comprise an award of AUD250,000 over 2 years for a research project in the field of Alzheimer’s disease, where the aim of the project is to develop and/or assess new treatments for this condition.
- Applicants must be members of staff of the University of Sydney or of the Hebrew University, with an appointment of appropriate duration. All else being equal regarding merit, joint applications for cooperative projects between members of staff of the two Universities will be given preference.
- Applications should conform to the instructions available from the Fund’s office. (See below.)
- Completed applications should be sent by email to the submission address below by the closing date.

**Applications & Enquiries** Sue Freedman-Levy, Administrative Officer, SZCUF, University of Sydney, F13, NSW 2006, Australia

T +61 2 9351 6558  F +61 2 9351 6647  E sueflevy@anatomy.usyd.edu  W www.szcuf.org.usyd.edu.au

**Submission Address:** szcuf@anatomy.usyd.edu.au
The University’s Charles Perkins Centre opens its new research and education hub this semester, bringing together world-leading researchers from a broad spectrum of disciplines in its mission to combat diabetes, obesity and cardiovascular disease.

With a brand new building, an innovative academic strategy, and the appointment of more than a dozen new professorial chairs, the centre provides a visionary combination of cross-disciplinary research and education. Its Academic Director, Professor Steve Simpson, says “Internationally, the model we have developed for the Charles Perkins Centre is unique. It is not a stand alone institute but rather serves to enable success across the University and its affiliates by providing new collaborative research and educational opportunities that cross disciplines and boundaries. The aim is to improve the health of individuals, communities and the nation.”

The centre is facilitating collaboration between researchers and practitioners in health and medicine with experts from many disciplines. These include arts and social sciences, architecture, business studies, education and social work, engineering and information technology, and the physical, life and environmental sciences.

“Tackling complex problems such as obesity and metabolic diseases requires many disciplines to work together,” says Simpson. “The Charles Perkins Centre will provide an environment where new perspectives can yield paradigm shifts in understanding and provide novel solutions.”

The centre has established 24 research project nodes to date, he says, and projects now underway provide a strong sense of the centre’s multi-disciplinary character. They include: a flagship Preconception, Pregnancy and Childhood Cohort Study which will investigate how parents’ lifestyles impact on their unborn child’s life, and the development of digital apps and avatars for managing a healthy lifestyle. They also include a health literacy node which will help people understand how to communicate about their health and interpret medical information; a node dedicated to understanding the role of the community of microorganisms in the gut in health and disease, and a node to improve nutrition for Aboriginal communities.

Professor Simpson says the centre is also developing new educational programs, both for students and health professionals. The centre is planning a new award program in the area of health technology innovation. “It’s the first in a series of many,” says Simpson.

The vision and ambition of the Charles Perkins Centre has been recognised by external donors, who have contributed $60 million so far to support the appointment of the Chairs who will help lead its research: $20 million from a Picasso painting donation, $15 million from an endowment by Elwin à Beckett (see story on page 38), $15 million from medical devices company ResMed, $5 million from the Australian Diabetes Council and $5 million from the Janet Dora Hine Bequest.

Although the CPC has its research and education hub in a brand new building, whose shimmering metal and stone façade has become a landmark of the lower campus at Camperdown, Professor Simpson emphasises that the centre “is a community, not a building. Whereas the building on central campus is a research and education hub,” he explains, “the Charles Perkins Centre is by no means limited to this one building. Our researchers will also be located across the campuses of the University and at our clinical schools and affiliates. For example, we already have Charles Perkins Centre Nepean and are soon to launch Broken Hill. Plans for Westmead are being developed.”

Teaching began in the new building at the start of Semester One, and during the year ahead, some 500 researchers
from other locations in the university will move into the building, along with the new Chairs and their teams and colleagues from the Centenary Institute and the Heart Research Institute.

The new building features numerous innovative features, including an initiative to have researchers sharing open-plan spaces rather than have traditional offices. For example, Professor Simpson has forgone an office to work in open-plan. The idea is to optimise the cross-fertilisation of ideas between researchers, and between researchers and students.

"In a traditional biomedical research centre, you would have one floor for diabetes, another for obesity, and a third for cardiovascular disease," he says.

“You would have only PhD students, no undergraduates taught in the building.”

A world-class feature of the building is the X-Lab, a 240-seat teaching laboratory which allows up to eight lab classes to be held at the same time. Simpson says: “the X-Lab is the best in the world. We have visited other, super labs in the US/UK and improved their design, and incorporated world-leading technology.”

“We have set up the conditions for harvesting both deliberate, and haphazard cross-pollination of ideas.”

There are also fabulous computing and microscopy labs, beautifully designed break-out spaces and numerous seminar rooms, as well as a 360-seat auditorium for lectures and public talks. "By having undergraduate students being taught in the building we have set up the conditions for harvesting brilliant young minds from the outset and engaging them in the work of the centre," he adds.

There will also be high-end infrastructure housed in the building, including University Core Research platforms for human and preclinical imaging, cellular imaging, cytometry, and proteomics, as well as the Clinical Research Facility. It will generate new clinical research opportunities in partnership with the Sydney Local Health District and colleagues in other districts and clinical schools.

**RESEARCH CHAIR APPOINTMENTS**

Appointments to date include:

**Professor David James:** Leonard P Ullmann Chair in Systems Biology (Faculties of Science (School of Molecular Bioscience) and Medicine).

**Professor David Raubenheimer:** Leonard P Ullmann Chair in Nutritional Ecology (Faculties of Science (School of Biological Science) and Veterinary Science).

**Professor Lisa Bero:** Chair in Medicines Use and Health Outcomes (Faculty of Pharmacy).

**Professor David Castle:** Janet Dora Hine Chair of Politics Governance and Ethics (Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences).

**Professor Charles Mackay:** Australian Diabetes Council Chair (Faculty of Medicine).

**Professor John Cawley:** Visiting Professorship in the Economics of Obesity (Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (School of Economics), also based at Cornell University).

**Associate Professor Emmanuel (Manos) Stamatakis:** Chair in Health Exercise and Physical Activity (Faculty of Health Sciences).

**Professor Robyn Gallagher:** Chair in Nursing (Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery)

**Professor Shaun Jackson:** leader of Cardiovascular Research, Heart Research Institute and Charles Perkins Centre (HRI and Faculty of Medicine).

**Other appointments** in the near future will include two more Leonard P Ullmann Chairs (in Psychology and Obesity Science), the à Beckett Chair in Gut Health, and the Res Med Chairs in Biomedical Engineering and in Sleep-Disordered Breathing & Chronic Disease Management.
Majors university libraries the world over are reassessing how they operate in response to the changes generated by the development of digital resources, the networked environment and new technological opportunities. Traditional university library services were built around the development and curation of physical information resources, typically books and journals and, at scale, required large numbers of staff providing a range of high-volume services involved in borrowing, returning and providing space for reading. Collection size was all. This stable world ended in the early 1990s as electronic journals and the internet began to revolutionise not only the publishing industry but also the practice of scholarship and learning.

The University Librarian, Anne Bell, says that today, across the major Australian university libraries, an average of 85 per cent of the funding spent on information resources is used to purchase content in digital form. At the same time, loans of books and other physical items have declined substantially; an average drop of nearly 40 per cent was recorded from 2002 to 2012.

It’s not that university libraries are less busy. Indeed, the opposite is true. It’s just that the majority of resources and services are now delivered virtually. “In 2012 the University of Sydney issued 1.4 million physical items but users downloaded nearly 3 million e-readings and over 8 million journal articles,” says Ms Bell.

“The level of e-book use at nearly 1.3 million downloads each year will shortly overtake loans of our entire stock of physical books. We received approximately 2.5 million physical visits to our library in 2012 but received over 5.5 million ‘visits’ to the library website alone.”

This data reflects a level of accessibility that could barely have been imagined 20 years ago. The University’s Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor Stephen Garton, underlines the significance of this revolution: “It frees the researcher, teacher and student from the tyranny of time and place —increasingly they can undertake their research and studies at any time and from anywhere in the world.”
However, Professor Garton adds that despite the reality of how most users now access library resources and services, “the collections still represent a vital research resource. But there can be tensions between traditional patterns of library use and emerging patterns of utilisation”. Many research libraries have been remodelled to deliver a wider range of study accommodation, including high-tech shared study spaces as well as traditional quiet study areas, to reflect changing teaching and learning practices in particular, and this has meant some collections have had to be relocated or put into storage, a point of friction for those wanting immediate access to vital research resources. Nonetheless, he adds, “most of the major libraries in the world have substantial parts of their collections in storage and sophisticated retrieval systems. Sydney is no different”.

Bell acknowledges that some commentators see this as somehow symptomatic of a “dumbing down” of the library experience. “This reflects the growing tension between change and continuity in libraries. Some look back wistfully to their perception of a golden age of research libraries while others bemoan what they see as the glacial pace of change,” she explains.

“What can get lost in the broader debate is the huge increase in access to knowledge that digital resources and the networked environment have enabled. In 1990 researchers, academics and students at the Group of 8 research-intensive institutions in Australia had access, on average, to approximately 18,500 current journal titles through their university libraries. “By 2012 that figure had increased to over 100,000 titles. Whatever the concerns about retaining the best of the past, we should celebrate the academic and other benefits that this increased access to knowledge brings.”

This fundamental shift in how users interact with library resources begs the question of what it means to be a research library in the 21st century. Initiatives in the US, UK, Canada and elsewhere have all attempted to support discussion around the future of both academic and public libraries. Bell says that although there is no single view of how to proceed, there are opportunities to deliver new, distinctive services.

The University’s plan for the development of its Library proposes a range of new opportunities. These include the allocation of increased resources for the digitisation of rare books and special collections to bring them to new local and international audiences.

A further proposal is to facilitate e-research and digital scholarship by providing infrastructure to enable academics, researchers and students to deliver digital projects. By way of example, Bell refers to a project her team had been involved with when she worked in the UK. “The institution had a unique collection of French theatre prompt books and plays from around the time of the Great Terror and the French Revolution. Students in the French Department were closely involved in the process of selecting and digitally preserving plays from the period. They then had the opportunity of producing original research based on the plays they had selected and an online journal was published to disseminate their work.”

Critically, there are also opportunities for librarians to reinvent themselves through close engagement with students, academics and researchers. Today’s technology-enabled landscape can lead to creative and genuinely user-centred research library models based on engagement, partnership and understanding of the workflows, processes and communities of practice as well as the information needs of users.

Bell says the University is also considering making some of its facilities open 24 hours, seven days a week. “Under this plan, study facilities at the Fisher Library and at four re-developed sites would potentially become 24/7 operations, with students and staff using swipe-card technology to access these facilities.” This is an essential measure to improve the student experience. Students have consistently highlighted longer opening hours as a key priority for the Library.

In conclusion, Ms Bell says that despite the understandable concern of some users, it has never been a better or more exciting time to work in research libraries. The opportunities to re-position traditional professional skills and expertise in support of digital scholarship and independent learning have never been greater. The old certainties may have gone but the new digital landscape promises a bright future for those libraries that choose to embrace it.
EXTREME DIETS

SCIENCE VS THE HYPE
There are almost as many claims, contributions and comments on food, diets and obesity as there are opportunities in the modern world to consume large quantities of energy-dense foods. Rare is the person who can seamlessly move from one sphere to the next, carrying with her the calm voice of reason and authority – backed both by scientific rigour and personal experience.

Associate Professor Amanda Salis has been the eye on the end of the microscope, the mind leading large-scale research projects, the advocate for sensible eating practices in mainstream media and the confused girl trying to make sense of competing claims about food and nutrition.

This uncertainty set her on a path to where she is today – a National Health and Medical Research Council Senior Research Fellow at the University of Sydney’s Boden Institute of Obesity, Nutrition, Exercise & Eating Disorders (which will be moving into the newly opened Charles Perkins Centre later this year).

“I was very concerned about my own weight (as a teenager) and I would read things in diet books or the media and get so confused by all the rubbish which is out there.”

Eventually, the young Perth girl’s inquiries led her to a book by Dr Wolfe Segal, a senior lecturer in Biochemistry at the University of Western Australia. “He had published a little book which was a collection of his newspaper articles. He was selling it so my Mum called him up and asked where she could buy a copy, and he invited us to his house to pick one up,” she recalls.

That meeting changed her life. “He was approaching nutrition with facts and research, so he could speak with real authority,” she explains. “Meeting him was the whole inspiration for my career. I wish I had told him [how much it meant]. You should never take those conversations that you have with young people for granted.”

Salis’s career began with a Bachelor of Science, majoring in Physiology and Biochemistry at UWA and extended to include a PhD in Medical Sciences at the University of Geneva. She then returned to Australia to head up a team at the Garvan Institute of Medical Research.

Having struggled with her own weight issues as a young woman, Salis wanted “to find out what it was that was causing that hunger” and started researching what she calls the Famine Reaction, which is triggered by chemical changes in the brain when there isn’t enough food intake to sustain your body weight.

Not only does it trigger hunger, but it winds-down movement and energy levels and, even if you “white-knuckle” it to stick to the diet and keep exercising, weight loss will slow down and stop because the Famine Reaction also drops the metabolic rate.

“It’s an evolutionary response: your body is telling you not to waste energy chopping vegetables and chewing them, just go straight to the chocolate aisle.”

Using rats and mice, Salis spent years looking for the magic bullet to switch it off. “We would identify the genes we thought were involved in mediating the Famine Reaction and knock them out in mice. We used state-of-the-art genetic techniques to do this but the famine reaction is much cleverer and undoubtedly switched on different genes because the resulting mouse lines ended up fatter than if we hadn’t deleted the original gene.”

She decided to change direction, doubting we will be able to overcome the Famine Reaction through genetic or pharmacological interventions in her working life. That brought her to the University of Sydney, where her focus has shifted to translating what she already knows about the Famine Reaction and how to tame it into real-world clinical practice for more effective weight loss.

New research has given Salis ideas for alternative, dietary approaches to reducing the Famine Reaction. One such approach that Salis is investigating involves severely restricted diets called very low calorie diets (VLCDs). She has been awarded an NHMRC grant to set up the TEMPO Diet trial, recruiting obese women living in Sydney (with a Body Mass Index of 30-40 kg/m2) to study the longer-term consequences of VLCDs.

Specifically, she aims to assess whether the rapid weight loss brought about by VLCDs affects metabolic health, body fat content and distribution, muscle mass and strength, and bone density in post-menopausal women (see accompanying story).
The more research I did, the more I realised the diets might actually be beneficial in terms of keeping the Famine Reaction under control.

Although VLCDs work – people can lose up to around 20-24 kg in three months compared to about 5-10 kg on conventional diets – Salis was, initially, not impressed. “I was a real advocate of eating enough, not going hungry, and not trying constantly to lose weight too fast,” she explains.

“I was disturbed when I saw a lot of health professionals such as endocrinologists and GPs using these very low calorie diets, which consist of liquid meal replacements, thinking ‘that just can’t be good, it must exacerbate the Famine Reaction’.

She set out to prove them wrong, with a research study designed to show how bad these very low calorie diets are. “However, the more research I did, the less I found to give evidence to the idea they were bad and the more I realised they might actually be beneficial in terms of keeping the famine reaction under control,” she admits.

“There is some funny stuff happening. People use VLCDs because they don’t feel hungry on these diets. After the first three or four days their body is breaking down so much fat, converting it into ketones to provide the fuel the brain needs, and those ketones appear to have other, interesting effects.”

Ketones seem to keep appetite under control and, interestingly, research from the University of Melbourne shows that when a dieter switches from a VLCD to a weight maintenance diet and stops producing ketones they feel hungry within a week. One of the aims of Salis’s current research is to determine whether VLCDs also keep other aspects of the Famine Reaction under control, such as the reductions in metabolic rate or physical activity levels that have been shown to thwart the efforts of even the most determined dieters.

Salis is the first to acknowledge this is an extreme diet that needs medical supervision because it can cause significant health problems in people with kidney or liver issues. But it works – and so quickly and with such freedom from hunger – that it keeps people highly motivated. The challenge now – and another focus of her current research (see separate story) – is to thoroughly review the impact of very low calorie diets on fat mass and distribution, muscle function and bone.

The professor also has serious personal credibility in this area, having lost nearly 30kg herself – and kept it off. “I did have a lot of weight troubles as a teenager. I was a fat kid. In those days fat kids weren’t that fat, but I was a fat kid and when I was going through university, I was very fat. I was 93 kg at my heaviest and that’s when I decided I wanted to work in weight...
management,” she says, describing her work as “a 100 per cent personal crusade”.

That crusade took her into the laboratory looking to find – and knock out – what she, and many other dieters, had found to be her worst enemy. “I could do a diet but after losing a bit of weight I would hit this invisible wall of resistance, get really hungry and stop losing weight even if I was sticking to the diet and exercise regime,” Salis explains.

“Nobody seemed to understand that invisible wall and that you can feel ravenously hungry even though you are obese. Nobody gave me, as a big person, the permission to feel hungry.”

Having moved from one side of the scales to the other, Salis is also aware of the toll that obesity takes on individuals, and is worried that the outcome may be irreversible. “People often think oh I am too big, too fat, I should do something about it. I’ll do it when I have more time to take care of myself, after I get my promotion, after I move house, after the kids leave home, when I retire, or whatever – as if they have a choice about when they can change their weight. But if you’re carrying excess weight it is actually an urgent situation. You should do something about it right away because you might not be able to do anything about it in the future,” she says.

“I know from my research with rats and mice and knowledge of the scientific literature that if you are exposed to a poor diet for long enough then there are changes in expression of the genes that cause the Famine Reaction, making them even stronger and more tenacious and making it almost impossible to lose weight. Nobody knows yet if that is permanent or if the same thing happens in humans, but we think it might be so.

“My Nanna always said don’t pull an ugly face because if the wind changes you will be stuck like that. I say ‘don’t eat an ugly diet because if your brain changes, you might be stuck with permanent obesity’. So don’t delay; the sooner you do something about any excess weight you may be carrying, the better.”

Our inner labrador

Amanda Salis admits to a degree of frustration that her work is so needed to combat the effects of a society that just encourages us to eat all the time. “We need moderate energy reduction across the whole community but people can’t do it on their own. When I go to conferences and I listen to symposia on health policy I want to scream and tear my hair out.

“Can’t we just get governments to put higher taxes on chips and chocolates and a subsidy on split peas? Oh no, that would be too complicated,” she throws up her hands.

“I think we are all labradors at heart and if there is food there, we will eat it. Unless you are constantly vigilant about what you eat – and constantly making the choice not to eat and not to have extra calories – then it just happens. You grow bigger and bigger.”

Ultimately, her advice is simple: “We should just eat normal, nutritious food, exercise and lobby the government so we don’t have rubbish in our faces 24/7. Eat normal food and listen to your body; eat when you are hungry and do something else when you are not.”

Watch a video of Amanda Salis outlining what you can eat during a day on an extreme diet

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**THE TEMPO DIET TRIAL**

The TEMPO Diet trial is recruiting obese women living in Sydney (with a Body Mass Index of 30-40 kg/m²) to study the longer-term consequences of very low calorie diets (VLCDs), to assess whether losing weight quickly affects metabolic health, body fat content and distribution, muscle mass and strength, and bone density in post-menopausal women.

“We will do a head-to-head comparison of fast versus slow weight loss,” says Amanda Salis, using a 12-month weight loss program with a further two years of follow-up.

While the participants focus on losing weight, Salis and her team will be addressing the ‘what happens then’ questions. “We are going to a huge effort to measure body composition, combining a series of techniques including magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and dual energy X-ray absorptiometry (DXA) scanning, tests with de-uterated water and a form of air displacement weighing to measure changes in fat, muscle and bone,” she says.

“If there are no bad effects on body composition from the very low calorie diet – and we will also be measuring psychology, eating habits, relationship with food and well-being – I will be fully converted and I will say ‘yes, use it’.”

She is also leading a sub-study of the PREVIEW Study Australia, the main study being led by another University of Sydney researcher, Professor Jennie Brand-Miller. This will explore similar themes but compare whether there are differences in the effects of weight loss on body composition between older and young people.

Do older people who lose weight lose more muscle strength and bone mass than young people – increasing the risk of frailty or osteoporosis – or not?

The study will also look at the effect of weight maintenance diets differing in protein content and glycaemic index to see if the impact of weight loss can be mitigated.

The PREVIEW Study Australia will ask participants (overweight men and women at risk of diabetes and aged 25-45 or 55 to 70 years of age) to follow an eight-week low calorie diet, followed by a weight maintenance diet for a total of 12 months, with ongoing review for a further two years.

To participate or learn more about these clinical weight loss trials, visit: http://sydney.edu.au/medicine/people/academics/profiles/asalis.php
Since the dawn of human space flight in the 1960s, Australian boys and girls have dreamed of becoming astronauts when they grow up. But only a few have made that dream come true: just two people born in Australia have ever been in space and the first, Paul Scully-Power, was a Sydney graduate. Both had to become US citizens first.

If Greg Chamitoff has his way, however, Australia could one day play a much bigger role in the exploration of space. The 51-year-old former NASA astronaut and engineer, who flew twice on the Space Shuttle and once on a six month International Space Station Expedition, was appointed last year as the University’s Lawrence Hargrave Professor of Aeronautical Engineering. In this role, he is leading a new push to expand Australia’s contributions to the global aerospace sector.

“I believe many of the scientific and technological breakthroughs that will come in the 21st century will be a result of our presence in space,” says Professor Chamitoff. “Australia should be part of this, taking a more active role in research, development and exploration. It has greater technical resources and potential to contribute than some smaller countries that are already engaged in space.”

Ideally, he says, Australia would have a national space agency to coordinate efforts by academia and industry in the space sector. Professor Chamitoff points to the experience of Canada, his country of birth, where the Canadian Space Agency formed in 1990 has made space technology a profitable export. A space agency of our own would also clear the way for Australia to participate in major global initiatives such as the International Space Station and future voyages to the Moon and Mars – and for Australian astronauts to fly under our national flag.

But even without an Australian space agency, there is still much we can contribute, he says, including in the areas of autonomous systems, robotics, propulsion, sensors, tracking, hypersonics and materials. Over the past six months, Chamitoff and his colleagues from the University’s Faculty of Engineering and Information Technologies have been working with aerospace companies and representatives from government and defence organisations to get some consensus and collaboration to improve aerospace capabilities, not only for local consumption but for marketing overseas, he explains.

Researchers at the University of Sydney have and will continue to have an important role to play, he adds, particularly in the development of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), which have a wide range of applications in air and space both related to and beyond the military uses they are often associated with. The University’s Australian Centre for Field Robotics is already a world class laboratory for autonomous vehicles and systems both in terms of the number of researchers and the scale of the systems it has already deployed. Researchers at the University have also pioneered a number of innovative UAV technologies such as the T-Wing, a proof-of-concept aircraft that takes off on its tail and transitions to horizontal flight.

“UAVs and robotic systems are fields in which we have long established capability and are already contributing significantly at a world-class level,” says Chamitoff. Over the coming years, he will be working with the faculty to bring its research and education into closer alignment with the needs of today’s aerospace industry.

Another priority in his new role is to nurture the next generation of aerospace engineers and explorers. In his lectures to undergraduates at the University, Chamitoff says he seeks to emphasise the
links between theory and the practical lived experience of space flight: “My goal is to show where this all leads, making the personal connection between the orbital dynamic equation and what it’s like to actually be in orbit following that trajectory.”

Outside the classroom, Greg also spends time speaking to high school students about life in space and lets budding astronauts know how they can follow in his footsteps. (Your best bet is to become an engineer, scientist, doctor or pilot, he advises, but the most important thing is to be passionate about whatever you do.) “Space exploration tends to be a subject that helps inspire young people to do all sorts of great things that may or may not be directly related to it.”

Greg Chamitoff’s own journey to the stars began at the age of six when he watched the launch of Apollo 11 from Cape Canaveral in Florida. “I was playing on a jungle gym, and my father was explaining what was going on,” he says. “From that day forward, it was something I always wanted to do.” After high school, he enrolled in an engineering degree and went on to complete a PhD in aeronautics and astronautics at MIT.

Not long after, in 1993, he was hired by the University of Sydney as a visiting lecturer in flight dynamics and control. For two years, Chamitoff lived and worked in Sydney, establishing a lifelong connection to the harbour city and the University. But he never stopped applying to work at NASA during his time here: “I had a dream of flying in space one day, and I couldn’t stay too long if I really wanted to do that.” He decided to move to Houston to stand a better chance of landing a job at NASA’s Mission Control, and in 1995, was hired as a guidance control specialist.

The coming boom in commercial space flight is particularly relevant to Australia because it will provide opportunities to take part without being dependent on NASA or foreign governments.

In his three years working at Mission Control, Professor Chamitoff helped to make preparations for the first launch to the International Space Station, enlisting some of his former students from the University of Sydney to build tools for visualising and optimising spacecraft manoeuvres. Eventually, after an anxious wait to gain medical clearance, he was chosen for the astronaut program. “Nothing comes so fast and furious as those first two years of training,” he says of his time at NASA’s boot camp for astronauts. “You feel like you’re drinking from a firehose.” He learned everything from how to fly the Shuttle to how to perform an emergency tracheotomy, and also had to become fluent in Russian.

In 2008, Greg Chamitoff was tapped to join mission STS-124 and flew on the Space Shuttle Discovery to the International Space Station, where he spent 198 days as a flight engineer and science officer. Much of his time was dedicated to assembling the space station itself and configuring equipment such as the a Japanese Experiment Module space laboratory (“it was like a giant IKEA furniture set”). He also ran more than 40 science experiments and participated in public outreach, such as an Earth vs Space chess match that he inaugurated.

During his second mission on the Space Shuttle Endeavour in 2011, he helped to install the Alpha Magnetic Spectrometer, the centrepiece of a $2 billion experiment...
Six things you didn’t know about life in space

1. A ride on the Space Shuttle was smoother than you might think. “I just anticipated something really violent, and it wasn’t that violent,” says Greg Chamitoff of the launch sequence, during which astronauts experienced three gs of acceleration. “I’m sure a Disneyland ride would be worse.”

2. Astronauts watch movies about space while in space. Professor Chamitoff and his Russian counterparts particularly enjoyed 2010: The Year We Make Contact, which features a tense stand-off between American and Soviet astronauts (in reality, the mixed crew got along well together).

3. The scariest moments may come in the middle of the night. On more than one occasion, Chamitoff was woken up by an alarm and needed to urgently assess the situation. “If it was a meteoroid hitting the station, there could be just minutes to deal with a leak by isolating modules.”

4. Freeze-dried space food tastes surprisingly good, except for astronaut ice-cream, which few (if any) astronauts actually like. Pizza, Diet Coke and real ice-cream (there are no refrigerators in space) were some of the items Chamitoff craved during his six-month mission.

5. Astronauts get lots of exercise. To counteract the loss of muscle and bone mass caused by living in microgravity, Chamitoff exercised two and a half hours every day on the space station.

6. Performing a spacewalk feels like scuba diving and rock climbing at the same time. It is “the most amazing thing that humans can do,” says Chamitoff.

Watch a video of Greg Chamitoff describing life in space

Greg Chamitoff. Courtesy of NASA
The University has lost one of its most distinguished alumni with the death of Sir John Cornforth, the only Australian scientist to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry. Sir John, who passed away in December, aged 96, shared the 1975 prize with Bosnian chemist Vladimir Prelog for “their efforts to relate molecular structure to the properties of chemical compounds”.

John Warcup Cornforth (BSc ’38 MSc ’39 DSc ’77) was born in Sydney in 1917, the second of four children. At the age of 10 he started to go deaf and by 20 he was completely deaf. Luckily, at Sydney Boys High School, a teacher steered Cornforth towards chemistry, which offered a career where his deafness might not be a handicap. He was accepted into the University at 16 and, because he couldn’t hear the lectures, he started reading textbooks, which in those days were mostly in German, so he taught himself German as well. He graduated with a bachelor of science, with first class honours and the University Medal.

After some postgraduate work in Australia, in 1939 Cornforth was awarded one of two 1851 Exhibition scholarships to study at Oxford. The other winner of the scholarship was Rita Harradence (BSc ’37 MSc ’38), who he had already met in the laboratory.

Equipment was so hard to get in those days that Cornforth had taught himself glass-blowing so he could repair things, and Harradence asked him to fix a flask she had broken. Expensive equipment was also the reason for Cornforth’s lifelong nickname of “Kappa”, because he used to engrave the Greek symbol on his glasswear to stop other students walking off with it.

Cornforth and Harradence arrived in Oxford just as the Second World War started and after they had finished their doctoral work, they became part of the group doing chemical studies of the new drug, penicillin. In 1941 the pair married and Rita became his co-researcher and interpreter. They collaborated on 41 scientific papers. After the war Australia had few openings for research chemists who could not lecture, so the Cornforths stayed in England. In 1946, he joined the scientific staff of the Medical Research Council and in 1951 his team completed the first total synthesis of the non-aromatic steroids.

At the Institute he shared an interest in cholesterol with the Hungarian scientist George Popjak. Together they identified the arrangement of the acetic acid molecules from which the structure of cholesterol is built, work that eventually led to Cornforth’s Nobel prize.

In 1962, Cornforth and Popjak left the Medical Research Council and became co-directors of the Milstead Laboratory of Chemical Enzymology, set up by Shell Research Ltd. In 1975 Cornforth left Milstead to become Royal Society Research Professor at the University of Sussex.

That same year came the Nobel prize. Rita heard the news of his award on the radio and told him. “I think that’s the day I remember with the most pleasure in my experimental life,” he recalled in 2006. “I was quite surprised. I had estimated my chances at about one in three. As for the ceremony, I couldn’t hear a word of what was said. And so, as usual, I amused myself by looking around at the audience.”

Cornforth continued lecturing at the University of Sussex until he retired. In 2011 the University of Sydney established the Rita and John Cornforth Medal, as part of the annual Alumni Awards, to honour PhD graduates for academic excellence.

Sir John Cornforth is survived by his children Brenda, John and Philippa, grandchildren Catherine and Andrew and four great-grandchildren. Lady Rita died in 2012.
Neeraja Sanmohanathan knows first-hand the fraught journey refugees are forced to make to find safety. In 1995, amid fighting in Jaffna during the Sri Lankan civil war, Neeraja then aged eight, left home with her younger brother and mother to travel to Chavakachcheri and then onto the Killali refugee camp.

“We waited three days to cross the Killali lagoon. We were one of the last people to cross as this passage was later stopped by the government,” she recalls. “I wasn’t scared because I was a kid and it seemed like an adventure.” They then made their way to Colombo, staying with friends before eventually settling in Sydney and reuniting with Neeraja’s father. Now, 18 years later, Neeraja is researching her Doctor of Philosophy (Health Sciences) at the University of Sydney.

Her area of research – a study of transgenerational trauma in Sri Lanka’s civil war – draws on her own experiences and that of her family. Neeraja is a Tamil born in Jaffna (northern Sri Lanka), but she and her family “moved around a lot” due to an increasingly unstable political situation.

“We definitely had bombs fall on our village. I have very strong memories of running to the bunker and going into foetal position and hearing bombs dropped.”

Neeraja’s uncle died after a piece of shrapnel struck him as he was riding his bicycle home. Although too young to remember the very worst of the conflict, she says: “my parent’s generation witnessed shellings and bombings.” They also had friends or family members killed or imprisoned. It is the lingering trauma that Neeraja is researching. “My PhD looks at the Tamil migrant community in NSW and out of that population how many people show symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).”

At 22, I went to Christmas Island – and was exposed to more than any (university) degree. People were sewing their lips up.

Neeraja is also studying the effects this trauma has on the next generation. “There’s a culture in Sri Lanka of children looking after their parents generally speaking. When you grow up in a war it forces you to be even more protective. It’s a mechanism that develops. I am looking at how the second generation has been vicariously traumatised – by storytelling, TV, having family members still there in Sri Lanka.”

Having completed a Bachelor of Arts in 2009, followed by a Masters in Rehabilitation Counselling, Neeraja commenced her PhD a year ago. At first, “the [Human Ethics] Committee was worried if I was mentally able to handle this topic because of my strong links to the community.” But she worked with her supervisor to put in place “debriefing and support mechanisms”. Once accepted to start her PhD, Neeraja consulted Sri Lankan community groups who will assist her in getting the questionnaire out to the diaspora (this process has not happened yet). Neeraja is using the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) criteria when assessing if subjects have PTSD.

“I’m looking for things like flashbacks, nightmares and intrusive memories.”

Neeraja hopes her research will have a positive impact on the community. “War trauma is complex and there are individual differences in how trauma impacts upon their day-to-day lives. Although Sri Lanka’s 30-year civil war has ended, the long term effects of trauma and trauma symptoms need to be explored in order to better support a migrant population in a newly settled country.”

It is the first study of its kind to be done in Australia. She faces some challenges with her subject matter. “Mental health is a huge taboo topic in the community. ‘Mental’ there [in Sri Lanka] means ‘crazy’ – there’s a lot of stigma around it.”

Neeraja’s undergraduate years were spent at the University of Sydney studying Psychology and Sociology. “I was fascinated but my mum put me off the idea,” she says laughing. “She looked at my Psychology textbook where there was this woman looking dazed and staring into space on the cover and my mum said, ‘Are you sure you want to be doing this?’”

After finishing her undergraduate studies, Neeraja started working at the Institute for Emotionally Focused Therapy and assisted in a research project whilst also enrolling in a Masters. She took a break in 2009 and went to Christmas Island to work as an interpreter with Sri Lankan refugees at the detention centre. After Afghans, Sri Lankans comprise the highest number of refugees to Australia.
“I went to Christmas Island when I was 22 – and was exposed to more than any [university] degree. I was there when the Malaysian Solution was introduced and when people were sewing their lips up.”

She slept in dorms and worked long hours, especially when a new boat of asylum seekers was brought to the island – often in the middle of the night. It was a demanding job, particularly when Neeraja put herself in their shoes. “It was really difficult for me because they arrived 10 years later [when policies had changed] and I had my dad here already. I knew these people would spend a significant period of time in detention.”

She found it confronting to hear the expectations of each new asylum seeker. “Christmas Island threw me into a world where I saw it all first hand – [the refugees] getting there [to Christmas Island] and getting all excited and then going through the trauma of the whole thing [detention].”

She understands those initial misconceptions: “The stories you hear back home (in Sri Lanka) are the ones of those that have made it.” A lot of the bad experiences are swept under the carpet because “people don’t want to worry their parents”.

But despite the intense experience of working and living on Christmas Island, Neeraja is not cynical or jaded. “I would still like to believe there’s a lot of hope. Despite what many asylum seekers have been through they are still thankful.”

Neeraja continues to be involved in refugee work. “I have continued to go back and forth to Christmas Island. Last time I went was August-October 2012.”

Last year she began working as a torture and trauma counsellor at STARTTS (NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors). With a combination of practical and clinical work as well as her academic research, Neeraja would one day like to work in policy. “I definitely see myself influencing policy at some stage, as well as an academic career at some point down the track. But first I would like to build up my clinical skills.”

Neeraja expects that her PhD will be completed in 2016. “I will have many days where I wish I didn’t start this long and tedious journey. But when I do, I look at a special post card that was sent to me by the University. It sits on my work desk wherever I go. It simply says ‘Neeraja. No limits’ at the forefront of an image of the Quadrangle.”
When Harriet Pratten was 10 years old, she wrote a story about her dream life for a school project. In it, she pictured herself living in Africa working in an elephant orphanage. Now 34, Pratten might not be nurturing baby elephants, but in the past six years, she has launched a documentary project that brought her in contact with South Africa’s most celebrated leaders, and has built a successful digital media advertising agency in Cape Town. Her travels have taken her through the depths of the African continent.

Pratten first travelled to Africa in 2008 for what was meant to be a two-week working holiday with her partner, wildlife photographer Adrian Steirn, to set up a photo gallery in one of Africa’s most exclusive game parks, Singita Private Game Reserves, in South Africa.

“What was meant to be a two-week trip has now turned into six years. The whole business has been incredibly organic. In some ways I’m as surprised to find myself here as my friends and family [are].”

When two weeks was extended to a month, the couple decided to make a go of living in South Africa, though at the time they weren’t sure what that would mean. Pratten flew into Sydney to pack up her belongings and sell her home in Sydney’s Paddington before returning.

The desire to spend time living an adventurous life overseas dates back to her university days (BCom ’96). After finishing her degree, where she majored in marketing, accounting and commercial

WORDS
ANNELI KNIGHT
PHOTOGRAPHY
HARRIET PRATTEN

Harriet Pratten went on a two-week visit to Africa – and stayed. Now she runs a media and photographic agency, telling stories about the icons of our age.
law, Pratten enrolled in short courses as diverse as finance at the Securities Institute of Australia and photography at the National Art School.

It was while studying commerce that she decided to begin her career in marketing as a means to venture into more creative roles. Pratten attributes her time at university as a crucial first step in a chain of events she could never have dreamed possible. “Commerce was a good grounding. I think it has been the stepping stone to everything else.”

Once committed to South Africa, Pratten and Steirn “spent the first year in the bush, primarily [taking photographs], and then it kind of grew from there. The next stepping stone was a project we put together called the 21 Icons project, a multimedia project of photography and short films about iconic South African men and women.”

21 Icons was a passion project for the couple that they initially funded themselves. It involved the creation of 21 three-minute films, each one featuring a living icon who had been involved in the struggle to set up democracy in South Africa. The first series of 21 films has been aired on television throughout 2013 and includes features on Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu and FW de Clerk (see accompanying article).

We didn’t know a soul when we arrived, but there’s something in not knowing the rules of the game and thinking that anything is possible.

Pratten and Steirn have also been working on a second series featuring 21 emerging icons in South Africa, and a third series of youth icons, which will be screened over 2014-15.

As well as a film dedicated to each subject, the couple also created an official portrait shot, a series of behind-the-scenes reportage photographs and an essay about the individual’s life.

It was through the contacts and networks established during this project that the couple built the foundations of their Cape Town business, The Ginkgo Agency (named after the Ginkgo Biloba tree, which Pratten says has both a left and right brain, a concept that reflects the creative and strategic aspects of the business).

The agency is a hybrid creative content agency and production house that now employs 20 local photographers, videographers, writers, directors, producers and editors to create narrative-based content for clients, predominantly based in Europe and the US.

There is no typical week for Pratten and Steirn, with their jobs regularly taking them beyond South Africa, including Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Uganda, as well as regular trips to the UK and the US.

Recent projects include a documentary about the endangered Caucasian leopard in the small former Soviet nation of Azerbaijan. “It’s stuff you couldn’t imagine...”
Harriet Pratten has been deeply affected by the death of Nelson Mandela (LLD ‘00), who she met on a number of occasions through the creation of the 21 Icons project. “We were there for his 93rd and 94th birthday, and a number of occasions in between when we collected the portraits that he’d signed. Pratten says she secured the interview with Mandela after establishing the project through interviews with several of his contemporaries. “He’s a very charismatic person, incredibly welcoming and he puts you at ease – he made jokes with us. To be in his presence is an incredibly humbling experience and despite yourself even if you tell yourself you’re not going to get emotional in front of him, throughout most of the shoot there were tears rolling down my cheeks,” Pratten says.

“When you see his eyes light up and he said he never thought they’d release him from jail, and to be sitting with him in his country home, was something I’ll never forget.”

Pratten says the shoot was one of the most nerve-wracking moments of her life. “He was the initial inspiration [for the 21 Icons project]. It was surreal, we’d been told so many times that it would never happen, he was the most iconic man in the world and to be afforded the opportunity to take a portrait of him was something so many people wanted to do.”

Mandela enjoyed seeing the other portraits that had been completed for the project, Pratten says. “All of these people that we have photographed were his comrades and people that he knew personally. Mandela called Yvonne Chaka Chaka the Princess of Africa when her portrait came up and made very fond comments of her, and Tutu was a good friend of his,” Pratten says.

“He’s always said there were many people involved in the struggle, and part of the idea behind the project was we wanted to showcase the many other men and women of great significance who played a hugely important part in what is the new South Africa today.”

By coincidence the final documentary that encapsulated all the interviews of series one of the 21 Icons project was aired in South Africa in the week of Mandela’s funeral. “It’s just uncanny timing that the first series has come to a close and the driving force for us, his life, has come to an end.”

Other work includes a series of short films for a South African national branding project, a job in the US documenting the American prairie, and the final portrait for the first series of the 21 Icons project.

“It’s definitely not for the faint-hearted, it hasn’t been easy. We didn’t know a soul in South Africa when we arrived, but there’s something in that naivety of not knowing the rules of the game and thinking that anything was possible. When you’re in your home environment you’ve got preconceived ideas of what is possible, what is not possible, whereas here it was carte blanche,” Pratten says.

“When you just go for it, what can happen? It either works or it doesn’t.”
FACULTY OF LAW

IMPACT OF DELAYED REPORTING OF CHILD SEXUAL ASSAULT
This six-month project is funded through the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. It is commonplace for children who are sexually abused not to disclose the abuse at the time it is taking place, with many not disclosing for some years, if at all. The aim of this research is to examine the prosecution process, including appeals, for cases of child sexual abuse that are reported in adulthood compared with those reported in childhood. The project team of Dr Rita Shackel and Professor Patrick Parkinson is led by Associate Professor Judy Cashmore.

PROTECTION OF REFUGEES WITH DISABILITIES IN CAMPS
This AusAID-commissioned research over three years provides valuable insight into the incidence, causes and types of disabilities among refugees. People with disabilities are made especially vulnerable by situations of displacement, but governments and humanitarian assistance providers currently lack the knowledge base to assess and respond to their needs. The project team began in 2012 with fieldwork in Malaysia and Indonesia, followed by a scoping mission to Pakistan, then three weeks in Uganda, where they surveyed more than one thousand refugees.

‘SEXTING’ AND YOUNG PEOPLE
This project seeks to understand how young people perceive and practice “sexting” and assesses the appropriateness of existing law and policy in this area. The increasing and innovative use of new technologies and networks to disseminate explicit material presents a growing legal and policy challenge. This is a particular policy concern when young people engage in such behaviour while not fully...
understanding the potential harms and legal consequences. This project is funded by a two-year Criminology Research Grant from the Australian Institute of Criminology, and supported by the NSW Commission for Children and Young People.

Associate Professor Murray Lee is a principal investigator of the Sydney Institute of Criminology team.

PROTECTED ACTION BALLOTS AND PROTECTED INDUSTRIAL ACTION
This Australian Research Council Discovery Project will examine the process by which employees and their bargaining representatives choose to take lawful industrial action under the Fair Work Act. The project explores the effect of the statutory processes on bargaining representative decision-making and bargaining behaviour, and the effect on employee access to lawful industrial action. The results of this project will be of national economic and social benefit. It is the first Australian empirical study of strike ballots, analysing an important public policy area.

Associate Professor Shae McCrystal is leading a team that includes Professor Breen Creighton (RMIT) and Professor Richard Johnstone (Griffith University).

NETWORK FOR BODIES, ORGANS
The new generation of human tissue technologies has unleashed tidal waves of ethical, political and religious ferment which are challenging traditional understandings and threatening to cause conflicts and dysfunctional societal outcomes. A two-year project sponsored through the University of Sydney Research Networks Scheme (SyReNS), it is examining identity, consent, control and justice issues to develop a comprehensive understanding of tissue disputes and provide a multi-layered response to the problems being identified. The network will have a profound impact by linking academics, regulators and practitioners.

Professor Cameron Stewart, who leads this inter-University and multidisciplinary team of scholars from a diverse range of fields, is Pro Dean at Sydney Law School.

FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WORK

KIDS’ ADAPTABLE TO CHANGE
Researchers have found that adaptability, the ability to adjust to new and changing situations and conditions, is essential for young people’s wellbeing. A team led by Andrew Martin showed that young people can be taught how to think about things differently, how to modify their behaviour, and how to adjust their emotions. “When we help them do these things, we build their adaptability, and their future.” The results of the study have been published in the Journal of Educational Psychology.

BENEFITS OF INVOLVEMENT IN THE ARTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE
A joint study by the Faculty of Education and Social Work and the Australia Council for the Arts has found that “engagement in the arts benefits students not just in the classroom, but also in life”. Students who were involved in the arts had higher school motivation, engagement in class, self-esteem, and life satisfaction than those who were not involved. The study, led by Andrew Martin, tracked over 600 students from primary and secondary schools in Australia over two years.

HSC MATHS AND SCIENCE ON THE DECLINE
A study recorded over a 10-year period, from 2001-2011, has revealed a decline in students taking up traditional disciplines in Mathematics and the Sciences. “The decline was most pronounced among female students, with the proportion of girls undertaking these subjects falling from 16.8 per cent in 2001 to 13.8 per cent in 2011. The study, led by Dr Rachel Wilson, calls for universities to reintroduce HSC prerequisites for entry into selected programs.

BILINGUAL PILOT PROGRAM IN SCHOOLS
Researchers have completed interesting research into the bilingual school program at NSW schools. The pilot program that started in 2010 focuses on delivering mainly Asian languages through immersion “meaning for an hour or so each day regular classes, such as history or geography, would be delivered in the second language”. The study, led by Dr Ruth Fielding and Associate Professor Lesley Harbon, reported that the model is successful and the method of learning “could be a strong model for language learning in other schools”.

30 MARCH 2014
MONETISING THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT
This project, by the Business of Health Network, is measuring the real changes in people’s physical activity, both qualitatively and quantitatively, in relation to health outcomes from a change in travel behaviour on the journey to work. Respondents will be changing from public transport to car or vice versa during the study, which aims to identify whether using public transport on the commute can provide the physical exercise needed for a healthy living without adding to already busy lifestyles. The trial will translate the identified physical changes into changes in morbidity then assign dollar values. This helps ensure that new transport projects are evaluated giving proper weight to the health outcomes from different transport modes. This multidisciplinary project involves researchers from Transport NSW.

FLEXIBILITY FOR WORKING PARENTS IN THE ‘HYBRID’ FAIR WORK SYSTEM
Professor Marian Baird and Associate Professor Rae Cooper from the Discipline of Work and Organisational Studies have received an ARC Discovery grant over three years to research the clash between the work and parenting roles of employees. They are undertaking a series of detailed case studies to evaluate whether the new Fair Work Act mechanisms help working parents to combine work with parenting. The research is of critical interest to businesses, professionals, government, trade unions and women’s advocacy groups. Professor Baird is Director of the Business School’s Women and Work Research Group. Associate Professor Cooper is an expert on industrial relations and gender and work.

THE AUSTRALIA CHINA BUSINESS RESEARCH NETWORK
The Australia China Business Research Network is launching its first bilingual online survey of Chinese investors in Australia and their perception of the Australian investment environment. This research is sponsored by the Australian Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industries and led by Professor Hans Hendrichke from the Discipline of International Business, an expert on emerging local entrepreneurship and business institutions, who is also Director of the School’s Australia China Business Network. For its China-based research on the “Globalisation of Chinese Enterprises”, the Network will cooperate with research partners from across the Business School, the China Studies Centre and Chinese partner universities.

VOICES FROM THE BASE OF THE PYRAMID
Governments and NGOs have historically been at the forefront of poverty alleviation. Recently, international agencies, the business sector and scholars have argued that it is possible to alleviate poverty and make profits simultaneously, when targeting the Bottom of the Pyramid (BoP): the three-four billion people who live on less than US$2 a day. However, a critical voice has been missing – the voice of the “poor”. This study is conducting interviews with the “poor” to critically examine what they think about companies trying to achieve seemingly contradictory objectives. The insights will inform the business strategies of companies targeting the “poor”. This multidisciplinary project is led by Dr Ranjit Voola, director of the Business School’s Poverty Alleviation Research Group.

WALK THE TALK
Walk the Talk focuses on efforts by consumers in Botswana to confront the multi-faceted stigma associated with HIV/AIDS that severely limits the wellbeing of both HIV+ consumers and their non-infected counterparts. A significant aspect of the project has been the production of an award-winning documentary, distributed in Botswana schools and universities, that discusses how HIV+ consumers go public with their status and go on to act as accountable role models. The project has also resulted in international written publications. Walk the Talk has partnered with Hero Condoms, an Australian company, to produce and distribute condoms specifically suited to consumers in Botswana.

The project researchers include Marylouise Caldwell (Sydney Business School) Kabo Matlho (School of Public Health), Ingeborg Kleppe (Norwegian School of Economics) and Steve Watson (Thinkbox Media).

CREATING SHARED VALUE
Researchers from the Balanced Enterprise Research Network (BERN) will examine the application of “creating shared value” (CSV) amongst large Australian corporations. CSV has become a fashionable business concept, based around the idea that firms must not only create value for shareholders but also their communities, the environment and society more generally. Using quantitative and qualitative research methods, BERN researchers will explore the claims made for CSV in improving financial, social and environmental outcomes in a range of business settings. The project is led by Professor Christopher Wright, who is an expert in the areas of organisational change and sustainability.
Fancy a new jumper this autumn? How about visiting your local hospital radiography department for ideas and inspiration? The idea may not be as crazy as it sounds.

Brooke Roberts is a knitwear designer with a difference. By day she works as a cardiac radiographer at King’s College Hospital, one of London’s largest teaching hospitals. And by night she designs amazing knitwear based on her patients’ CT and MRI scans.

Wearing what looks like one of her own creations – a short wool jacket with swirly patterns in pink and brown, and a full-length skirt, Roberts arrives at our meeting a little late and a little frazzled. She’s been frantically getting her yarn orders in on time, just one of many jobs she is saddled with as the lone driving force behind her own fashion label.

Four years ago, after working with other designers, Roberts felt confident enough to go it alone. She set up Brooke Roberts Knitwear www.brookeroberts.net and already supplies luxury knitwear products to a number of exclusive shops in London’s Mayfair.

We meet at the swanky and aptly named Hospital Club in London’s Covent Garden, where Roberts (BAppSc (MRS) ’97) won the Club’s Creative in Residence award in 2011. She explains that the club is a place where creative people come to cross-pollinate ideas and network. This is much more than idle chatter. The owner of the Club is Paul Allen, the co-founder of Microsoft, who also funds a brain research institute in Seattle. Allen has invited Roberts to use images from the Institute.

Her life is exciting but “difficult because I’m juggling two careers. Mine is an emerging label and my product is quite niche. Even though I’m unable to focus all my energy and time on developing my label, my two careers complement each other perfectly.”

Roberts says she’s always harboured a love of science and an interest in fashion, but never thought the two careers could co-exist so harmoniously. While studying Applied Science at Sydney, she attended a friend’s fashion show at UTS. It turned out to be her light-bulb moment.

“I couldn’t believe what I was seeing,” she enthuses. “I thought it was amazing that people could be so creative in expressing themselves and working to a non-brief. I loved the idea you could come up with anything and it was right. Something told me that this is what I should be doing. But I was committed to finishing my course first.”

As she casts her mind back to her time...
at Sydney, her overwhelming memory is of “newness and opportunity”. Growing up in rural Victoria, meant moving to Sydney was her first experience of living in a city. Through sports, mostly netball, she made links with Wesley College and ended up living there in her second and third years. “It’s just a beautiful place to live and I felt very lucky to have those opportunities.”

As far as academia goes, Roberts particularly enjoyed the imagery associated with her physics course. She was less excited by the actual physics. “I’m not a natural at physics so I found the course harder than I’d expected. But aesthetics has always been important to me so I enjoyed the cross-sectional anatomy and I loved the photography module I did, especially learning about wet developing.”

During her course, Roberts undertook a clinical placement at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, which led to a full-time job after graduation. She headed to London in 1998 where she has since worked in tandem as a radiographer and as a designer - initially for other people.

Her job as a radiographer helped finance courses at the London College of Fashion and at Central St Martin’s where she studied “innovative pattern cutting”. It was at this point that Roberts wanted to do something technical in fashion, rather than just design.

“I wanted to be a cutter so I was honing those skills,” she says. But she didn’t have experience of knit and it wasn’t until she began collaborating with another designer that they developed a way of cutting knit that was like cutting cloth. It’s complex because the level of detail in a medical image is so enormous that it is impossible to condense the detail into a knitting machine.

But Roberts clearly relishes a challenge, especially a technological one. “MRI and CT scans lend themselves well to knit,” she explains. “They are digital files so at their most basic level, they are pixels and in a knitting machine a pixel is a stitch, so they’re programmable, and they do translate. But you’d need a machine that was hundreds of metres wide to cope with that level of detail,” she laughs.

“So I had to go through a process of translation. I can simplify medical images and I can enhance or reduce their definition and make the image just black or white. It’s called the ‘grey scale’ in medical terms. When I play with the image, it loses its texture and becomes flat and then I can make that translate.”

Roberts only works with yarn and sources it mostly from yarn fairs in Italy. She particularly likes to order finer wools that originate in Australia and New Zealand as her family are wool farmers in Australia. “I use composition yarns, and I use viscose, wool, cotton, silk, plastic, metal, but I never use anything woven.”

Roberts’ approach is refreshing in that she doesn’t get her inspiration from other fashion designers. Instead, a lot of her ideas come from interior design and textiles. She makes time to go to as many exhibitions as possible to feed her thirst for innovation and creativity. She found a recent exhibition on pearls at the Victoria and Albert Museum particularly beautiful and relevant, as it included a series of x-ray images of the shells revealing the pearl inside.

“There are many things going on in my two fields of science and the arts and I want to be instrumental in bringing them together.”

With her boundless curiosity, her thirst for innovation and her love of technology and design, it’s easy to imagine the name Brooke Roberts going way beyond her knitwear label. She’s already got her eye on interiors and accessories, as well as other ideas of getting involved in education and pioneering programs that explore science from a creative and artistic perspective.

Last year she spoke at the high-profile TED talk series, at the invitation of a biophysicist in Athens, who is also a jewellery designer and saw her work online. The biophysicist was part of the TEDMED team and asked her to speak in Athens at TEDMED Live.

Roberts’ creativity has also been recognised through her inclusion in the Hospital Club list of the most innovative people in British fashion in 2013, which was published on The Guardian website.

“I’m a big dreamer. Even when I’m focused on something, I’m constantly getting new ideas about what I can make, where I can go and who I can work with.”
AGENT FOR CHANGE

WORDS DEBORAH TARRANT
Jeremy Heimans was eight when he first shot to global attention. The schoolboy from the Sydney suburb of Cremorne, intent on ending Cold War anxieties, had written a song called Rainbow of Peace that won the 1986 International Children’s Peace Prize. His effort earned him numerous interviews on prime-time TV and an introduction to then Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke, with whom he discussed Third World debt and malnutrition.

Subsequently, this curious, politically aware child met with a group of Nobel Prize winners and other young thought leaders to discuss pressing international issues. “I was worried about what was happening to the world. Would there be a nuclear war? I had views about the situation then unfolding in Libya,” says Heimans, who recalls his early precocity with amusement. So began a career in activism for the child of documentary-making immigrant parents who wanted to “make a difference.”

Fast forward 27 years and Heimans, now 35, is in the New York City headquarters of Purpose, the latest of several organisations he has co-founded, which empowers millions across the world to effect social change by having their voices heard. “It’s about creating new sources of power and helping the old ones adapt,” he says.

“Social-movement entrepreneur” Heimans has been recognised as a visionary leader by the Ford Foundation, and a Young Global Leader by the World Economic Forum. Fast Company magazine ranked him 11th among its 100 Most Creative People In Business in 2012. In the almost three decades since the acclaim of his first headline, he has completed a Bachelor of Arts/Law with honours in government at the University of Sydney, attended the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, interned at the United Nations, steepened his learning curve at management consultancy McKinsey & Company, and started a PhD at Oxford University.

His years at Sydney left an indelible mark and he remembers several teachers from the Department of Government and International Relations who shaped his thinking and view about the possibility of change. “Fred Teiwes and Linda Weiss were both great mentors and intellectual guides in helping me think about big issues like the nature of power, the international system etc. “The work I did for my honours thesis in Government absolutely helped shape my view that changing hearts and minds was as important as the technical solutions to making big change in the world, and that more and more major global decisions were taking place in a shroud of technocratic obscurity. We need people to have a direct voice in the decisions that would directly impact them.”

In 2004, during the US presidential election, Heimans started a campaign that told the stories of women whose loved ones were in Iraq, raising millions of dollars in online donations. He was hooked by the power of technology, impressed by the internet’s viral capability for spreading the word.

A year later, with university friend David Madden, Heimans returned to Australia to establish GetUp!, the online activist organisation that now has more members than all of the country’s political parties combined.

My honours thesis helped shape my view that changing hearts and minds was as important as the technical solutions to making big change in the world.

With his sights on global change, Heimans went back to New York in 2007 with Madden and others to form Avaaz, the global citizens’ movement, which now has more than 21 million members. “I was attracted by the fact that I could go to the US and just start stuff and people would say, ‘Sure, let’s give it a shot’.” Thus, Purpose was created in 2009 as an incubator, again with Madden. It has already spawned a multitude of social movements. Hot on its agenda now is All Out, a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) movement that’s looking beyond the focus on same-sex marriage in the United States and Australia to the conditions for people in the 70-plus countries where it is still unlawful to be homosexual.

Another is Meu Rio (My Rio), a movement set up to fight corruption in the Brazilian city, which, as Heimans observes, is “at a historical inflexion point where what happens with its development could benefit millions of poor people or just a privileged elite”. My Rio has notched up big wins, including promoting a constitutional amendment and major changes to the environmental code. “It has stopped demolitions in the favelas [slums] in the lead up to the Olympics and the World Cup,” he says. “Now we’re looking at taking that model to other cities. Originally, the city was all about the citizen. We’re trying to bring back some of that direct democracy.”
PurPOSE, with its staff of 80 spread across 1400 square metres of office space on New York’s Fifth Avenue, and in London and Rio, also acts as a consultant to institutions including Google, the Gates Foundation and the non-profit American Civil Liberties Union – helping them to create communities using 21st-century technology: Facebook, Twitter, email and building apps.

“Facebook and Twitter are very helpful for amplifying the message, making it spread quickly,” Heimans says. When All Out used the popular platforms to campaign against a bill that would make being gay punishable by death in Uganda, 200,000 people had signed its petition by the end of day one; 500,000 after four days.

Regardless, Heimans advises: “I tell people to start with a strategy that’s going to get people involved, not the technology. It’s important, but you need to use the best tools at the time.”

The teenage Heimans tried to halt the Gulf War by inundating the hotels hosting political antagonists US Secretary of State James Baker and Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz with faxes to convince them to stop. Often low-tech works better. One example, he says, is the missed call when a phone user dials a number and hangs up before the call is answered. This no-cost means of communication is flourishing in India and other parts of the developing world. “Those who want to let their friend know they’ve arrived at the cafe or let their partner know that they are thinking about them simply leave them a missed call.”

Its potential was highlighted when Indian anti-corruption activist Anna Hazare asked people to leave him a missed call and 35 million people responded. Subsequently, Purpose built Crowdring, an app that enables social movers and shakers in emerging nations to create a mobile campaign using missed calls to create their mailing lists, then inviting people by text to sign “mobile” petitions.

These days, Purpose is inundated with offers from enthused individuals wanting to join its teams. Heimans, a self-described “pragmatic idealist”, is a regular international event speaker who, often with self-deprecating humour, puts forward a compelling proposition. Fired up by the “wins”, he has lost none of his passion. Many causes remain close to his heart – from the sustainability of the world’s food system to climate change, political equality and LGBT rights. “With Purpose, I’ve created the perfect home for my desire to work on a lot of stuff. By nature, I love making things happen and I get very impatient, so in my old age, I’m trying to become the enabler.”

In speeches, Heimans stresses the importance of not forming a social movement around an individual and the difficulty of trying to effect change from within large institutions. “It’s not that institutions don’t work, but if you are trying to start a social movement, you don’t want to be trapped inside one.”

At Purpose, small individual working groups operate like start-ups, tackling individual issues. However, as it grows, can its co-founder stop Purpose taking on the frustrating characteristics of a big organisation? “Good question,” he says.
IN GOD THEY TRUST?
The religious beliefs of Australia’s prime ministers 1901–2013
Roy Williams
Bible Society $15.99
Australians don’t seem to learn about their leaders in the way people from other countries do. That makes this book a revelation, not just because it is an interesting examination of our prime ministers’ religious beliefs, but because it tells us something of their backgrounds, as well as their moral and philosophical attitudes to politics and life.

Author Roy Williams (BA ’84 LLB ’86) is not afraid to give his own opinions along the way. His leanings for or against politicians and their policies are guided by his understanding of the gospels. He never takes predictable Liberal or Labor stances, and that makes for interesting reading.

Williams interviewed both John Howard and Kevin Rudd, and concluded with Julia Gillard, just prior to the last election. He places the 23 prime ministers into categories according to a level of belief, and he rates their political performance using religious principles such as moral courage, abhorrence of war, compassion and the absence of racial bigotry. Williams is reluctant to label any as atheist, though he classifies several as agnostic. He also observes that the best Christian person is not the same thing as the best Christian prime minister.

LIMBANG REBELLION
7 Days in December 1962
Eileen Chanin
NewSouth Publishing $34.99
In the early 1960s Brunei was a British territory of North Borneo, rich in oil and natural gas. It had no public debt and its revenue was three to four times greater than its expenditure. Britain and Malaya planned to combine this and other British territories into a Federation of Malaysia but in December 1962 rebel forces rose up against the sultan and his colonial officers, the government and all high-profile foreigners.

Author Eileen Chanin (BA ’72) is the daughter-in-law of two Australians, Richard and Dorothy Morris, who were captured and held hostage during the Brunei Revolt. She has meticulously researched the events surrounding the rebellion, and has been able to give us first-hand accounts of Dick and Dorothy’s ordeal over this brief but tumultuous time. In spite of constant gunfire outside their small cell, they experienced much kindness from brave locals who risked their lives to bring them food and some comfort.

The Royal Marines executed a daring rescue without which the Morrises would probably have been executed. It’s this personal story unfolding amidst the facts of political upheaval and violent conflict that makes this book such a gripping read.

DREAMING TOO LOUD
Reflections on a race apart
Geoffrey Robertson
Vintage $34.95
This collection of insightful writings by Geoffrey Robertson (BA ’67 LLB ’70 LLD ’06) begins with a quiz that exposes how much we don’t know about our own country – but should. Robertson is entertaining as well as thought-provoking, and many a distinguished person has asked this leading human rights lawyer to speak or write on his passionately held views.

Many of these pieces have made it into the book: an insider’s view of Julian Assange; a speech about teaching human rights in schools; a lecture given in memory of writer and intellectual Christopher Hitchens, and another on the ‘Right to Know’ campaign; an introduction to a book on Michael Kirby. He talks about the first Australians, our founding fathers, war stories, the media, republicanism, human rights and free speech.

The title of the book is what Ned Kelly said to a country schoolteacher, Tom Curnow, who saved many lives by thwarting one of Kelly’s terrorist atrocities. Ned told Tom he was free to go home and straight to bed but warned, “Don’t dream too loud”, or he might be shot. The observations in this book show us that a number of Australians (and others) have been brave enough to “dream too loud”, fortunately for us.
Elwin à Beckett’s $15 million donation to the University to help fight bowel cancer has created a lasting legacy from a very private woman.

As news spread airing Wellington’s bush telegraph in rural NSW that a local woman had bequeathed $15 million to the University of Sydney, those who knew Emma Elwin à Beckett were astonished. She’d led such a quiet life that most people only realised the extent of her personal fortune when the bequest became public.

“It never crossed my mind that she would have $15 million to give away,” says Nan Woodley, Elwin’s lifelong friend and close confidant.

Elwin (or Ellie to her friends and family), passed away in May last year aged 91, leaving the residue of her estate to the University for cancer research, with a particular emphasis on bowel cancer. The William Arthur Martin à Beckett Cancer Research Trust was launched in December 2013 in honour of Elwin’s beloved older brother Martin, who died of bowel cancer at age 67.

Those who knew Elwin and Martin talk of an unbreakable bond between the pair. When Martin died, Elwin was paralysed with grief. From the depths of this despair came one of the Central West region’s most significant philanthropic acts.

“In her lifetime, Elwin wasn’t a community leader or a public figure, nor did she seek prominence for her opinions and ideas,” says her cousin, David Allworth. “But she obviously had a clear vision of how she could help, and has acted decisively and with force. Congratulations to Elwin for making a bequest that may give others the greatest inheritance possible – another day of life as the result of progress in medical research.”

The spectre of bowel cancer loomed large in Elwin’s family. As well as losing Martin, her cousin Nell’s husband, John Allworth died from bowel cancer when he was just 34. She survived a bout of bowel cancer herself as a young woman and her cousin David Allworth is a survivor of the disease.

Increased testing, more effective treatments and greater awareness of preventive measures mean the mortality rate from bowel cancer has fallen since Martin’s death in 1986. Back then, the mortality rate was 1 in 24, dropping to 1 in 41 by 2007, according to the latest comparative statistics available from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. However, there’s still much work to be done with an estimated 15,840 cases of bowel cancer diagnosed in Australia in 2012 and 3,950 fatalities.

The William Arthur Martin à Beckett Cancer Research Trust will be based in the Charles Perkins Centre at the University of Sydney. According to Professor Steve Simpson, the centre’s director, Elwin’s bequest will allow researchers to gain a better understanding not just of bowel cancer, but also its interrelated diseases.

“Bowel cancer doesn’t receive as much attention as other cancers but much more needs to be done to better understand it and the links between colon and bowel cancer, diet, and the complex community of bacteria living within the gut, the Professor Simpson says “These interactions are mediated by the immune system and inflammatory responses triggered in the gut, and are further linked to obesity, diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis and cardiovascular disease.”
The University is currently considering the optimal way to use the fund. Possibilities include the acquisition of essential equipment, new postgraduate scholarships, and the establishment of a new academic position: the Elwin à Beckett Chair for the Prevention, Detection and Treatment of Bowel Cancer.

Elwin’s bequest to the University of Sydney is extraordinary not because of the amount – large as it is – but because of where the money will be invested, and what it will help to achieve, says Belinda Hutchinson AM, Chancellor of the University of Sydney.

“Elwin’s gift to the University demonstrates the great faith she had in our capacity to prevent bowel cancer and deliver better outcomes for people with cancer,” says Belinda Hutchinson. “The University is aware that with this faith comes great responsibility. And because of the University’s recent success in cancer research, I can say with some pride, and much confidence, that we are well placed to accept that responsibility."

While Elwin would have been aware of the University’s credentials in cancer research, her closest link appears to be her great grandfather, Dr Arthur Martin à Beckett (1812–1871). He was a member of the Board of Examiners of the Faculty of Medicine at the University. His wife was Elwin’s namesake – Emma Louise Elwin.

Another connection to the University is Elwin’s aunt, Emma à Beckett, whose fiancé Jack Hay was shot down by the Red Baron during World War 1. Jack was a former student at the University and his family donated one of the bells of the Carillon.

Furthermore, Dr Nathaniel Barton, first cousin of Arthur à Beckett, Elwin’s father, studied medicine at the University of Sydney.

“We don’t know if these people were in her mind when considering possible institutions for the bequest, but they probably gave Elwin some kind of attachment to the University,” says her cousin, Elizabeth Allworth.

Elwin’s father Arthur Martin hailed from the Coonamble and Wellington districts where he was a grazer. Her mother Annie (known as Nancy) was from Victoria.

The family originally lived on a sheep property called Nelongwrie, near Coonamble, before moving to Mt Bodangora, a property near Wellington, in the 1940s. Elwin was an accomplished horse rider and her father’s “right hand” on the farm.

Both were schooled in Sydney, Elwin at Ascham School in Edgecliff and Martin at the King’s School in North Parramatta.

In the 1950s the family moved to the township of Wellington, buying a house in Maxwell Street. After their parents passed away, Elwin and Martin continued to live there. Their home was comfortable and elegant, filled with antiques, many of which had been handed down through the family.

The spectre of bowel cancer loomed large in Elwin’s family. As well as losing her brother, she survived it as a young woman as did her cousin, Hayward à Beckett who diligently managed her estate.

Nan Woodley remembers Elwin as a small child when they were both living on their family properties near Wellington. They lost contact for a few years, but reunited after Nan moved to Rose Bay in 1963. At the time, Elwin was in her late 40s and she and Martin were nursing their elderly parents through various health problems, which saw them come to Sydney a lot.

“They were both really curious and always keen to hear about you and what you thought about things,” says Nan. “There was always that intellectual curiosity. We had some quite intense conversations.”

Martin’s godson, Jim Chrystal, says Martin was very interested in art and enjoyed mentoring “up and coming” artists including Archibald Prize winner Tim Storrier, who grew up in the Wellington district.

“There was an 11-pointer stag head mounted in the hallway,” recalls Jim. “It was something he must have acquired well and truly deceased, as he was a true pacifist. I can still picture Mart ‘tootling’ around town in his early VW Beetle, double-parking to dash into the newsagent’s or someplace. He was kind, affectionate, always interested in family and friends and had a great sense of humour. He could always spin a good yarn.”

They were rarely extravagant. Elwin’s one overseas trip was in 1956 when at age 32, she boarded a ship for London, where she lived for a year. Although he lived in Paris and London after serving in the Middle East in World War 2, Martin’s only recorded splurge is the purchase of a Lancia car, which lived under a tarpaulin in the garage for most of its life.

Jim says they were a brother and sister thoroughly devoted to each other and loved dearly by all who knew them.

“They were very charismatic, charming, unusual, different, a rarity, uncommon, stylish and unique,” he says.

Although very private and modest in the way she lived her life, Elwin à Beckett’s generous gift to The University of Sydney for bowel cancer research may tell us much about her as a person.

She clearly had a grand vision that extended beyond herself, and a deep concern for the welfare of others. Her commitment to research may reflect a sincere hope that, in future, individuals and families can be spared the tragic effects of a disease which so severely impacted her own life and others close to her.
Dr Tejendra Pherali’s journey to gaining the vital education he passionately craved has been a formidable ascent in every way imaginable.

His earliest memory of school is climbing for one-and-a-half hours up a mountain each day to a dusty village classroom furnished with long wooden benches. He had a piece of slate to write on and a small stick of chalk. The class was made up of older children too – those who’d failed repeatedly and been held back. There were no books until halfway through the year when one book containing Nepali language and some numbers appeared. There was nothing to eat all day. It wasn’t done to bring food from home.

Today Pherali is Senior Lecturer and Program Leader of the Master’s in Education and International Development at the prestigious Institute of Education in London. The trajectory of his appointment can be traced back to a scholarship he was awarded at Sydney in 2004 to study a Master of Education in Research Methodology.

He studied at Sydney after answering an advertisement in a Nepali newspaper by the Australian embassy inviting applications for AusAID-funded university courses. Pherali was offered a place out of hundreds of applications and after a rigorous selection process. He chose the University of Sydney because it was “the oldest and the best”.

The degree instilled an understanding of academic and critical perspectives which has become a platform for the new role he started in September in London, where he is responsible for the welfare and academic achievement of about 100 students from all over the world.

“It’s a new and exciting challenge,” he says. “I’ve always wanted to make my passion my profession. The journey of my life relates to where I belong – in a rural village in Nepal – and now my research is all about educating people in the developing world. I’m feeling inspired and I know I can give back more to my country and my society.”

Pherali’s journey has been full of practical and cultural hurdles that most Westerners would not even imagine, let alone have to deal with. At the age of 11 he left home to go to a different school even further away. He lived with his brother and his wife but felt terribly unwelcome.

“It hurts to think back to that time,” he says quietly. “They were not rich and didn’t give me much food. I had no bed to sleep on either and had to go to a friend’s another half hour walk away to sleep in a corner. I cannot explain why, and at the time it wasn’t painful and I just got on with it. I carried my books everywhere, and studied on the move.”

Coming from a high social class meant his father was able to read and write at a time when the literacy rate in Nepal was less than 2 percent. This was crucial and real inspiration. “I benefited from my social class and my father raised me to believe he could achieve.”

After “mucking up” his education and living pretty much hand-to-mouth for a couple of years, he managed to enrol at the university in Kathmandu. For about six years, Pherali worked 13 hours a day, tutoring children and helping with schoolwork to pay for food and accommodation. He slept about five hours a night during that time. The perseverance paid off and he came top of his year.

In 2004 he won his scholarship to Sydney. “It was a huge educational and culture shock as I was trained very differently in Nepal,” Pherali says. “Sanskrit teaching says you learn from a guru – that’s the only way. The focus is on face-to-face time and if the students don’t do well, it’s because the teachers didn’t teach well.”

His master’s degree supervisor, Dr Rachel Wilson, recognised this difficulty and rescued him. “I was blocked and scared to arrange a meeting with her, which was what I should have been doing. She helped me to unlock my ideas and even helped me...
access relevant journals from the library to help with my dissertation.”

Wilson says: “The thing that made Tejendra shine was the fact that by the time he arrived in Sydney, he’d already overcome many educational hurdles – like walking miles barefoot to school, through swollen rivers, etc. This seemed to have contributed to his resilience. I knew at once that he was very passionate about educating himself and others. While he had a lot to adjust to as he started his master’s degree, his positive attitude and the fact that he did not falter at challenges and failures always saw him through.

“Did you know that when he came to study he brought his pregnant wife? She was very ill for her whole pregnancy. Tejendra cared for her and completed his studies, finishing his dissertation while celebrating the birth of his son, Ajay. I still keep Ajay’s photo on my notice board; if students spot it and enquire I can tell them the story. I am very proud of how far Tejendra has gone.”

On returning to Nepal, Tejendra used the skills he’d acquired at Sydney to benefit his own country. “What I learned at Sydney was academic writing and critical analysis. I took all that back with me and I designed a course on academic writing for Nepali students going to study in English-speaking countries.”

The course became hugely popular and has helped hundreds of students to understand the academic expectations of a Western education system, including how to reference properly, how to write objectively and how to structure an argument.

By the time he arrived in Sydney, Tejendra had already overcome many educational hurdles – like walking miles barefoot to school, through swollen rivers. This contributed to his resilience.

At the time of Pherali’s return, Nepal was coming out of a decade-long conflict. His research methodology skills came in handy too, as he managed a country-wide project on the role of young people in peace-building and community decision-making for the international organisation, Search for Common Ground.

“This was ground-breaking stuff in my country” Pherali says. “It was a whole new way of relating theoretical knowledge about research with research projects. I’d take students to collect data and we’d discuss how to make sense of it all. It was all about learning through research.”

It’s a long way from Pherali’s early learning experiences, when he would have to throw his books and clothes across a swollen river during the monsoon season, then wade through the water to get to school. All the kids in the mountains knew how and where to cross safely to end up exactly where they needed to be on the other side. “You had to calculate this precisely, otherwise you’d end up being smashed against the rocks by the current,” Pherali says. “That nearly happened to me one day when I was showing off, and one of the older boys dragged me out by my hair and saved my life.”

Today, Pherali has a PhD from Liverpool’s John Moores University under his belt, and from there he moved to the Institute of Education in London. Nevertheless, he claims that his eight-year-old son has read more books than he has. He insists, however, that his experience of education in Nepal was neither meagre nor miserable.

“What we had were strong values and a strong sense of learning,” he says. “Knowledge becomes obsolete, but if kids have a good attitude to cope with new knowledge, I think that is what matters. How much you know ceases to matter as information can be accessed so easily these days. What can’t be accessed so easily is innovation and creativity and that is what we got from our family, from our village.”

Left: Dr Tejendra Pherali.
Above: With his family in Nepal.
Last year turned out to be a stellar one for a host of University athletes and clubs.

YOUTH OLYMPIC FESTIVAL
Sydney University student athletes won an incredible 10 medals at the 2013 Australian Youth Olympic Festival (AYOF) held in Sydney in January. Jillaroos women’s hockey player Nina Khoury (gold) joined Sydney Uni rowers Holly Lawrence (two gold, one bronze), Emma Thomas (two gold, one bronze), India Evans (one gold, one bronze) and Peter Koster (bronze) on the podium.

RECORD WOMEN’S CRICKET
On February 3 the Universities Women’s Cricket Club (UWCC) was crowned 2012/13 Sydney Cricket Association First Grade Twenty20 Premiers, their first ever Premiership in any grade. In October, Universities women’s cricket captain Alex Blackwell and teammate Rachel Haynes put on the highest opening partnership (387) in the Sydney women’s grade competition history.

ROWERS WIN SIX STRAIGHT
New South Wales Open men’s eight – containing six Sydney University Boat Club (SUBC) representatives (Fergus Pragnell, Matt Ryan, Nick Purnell, Francis Hegerty, Sam Loch and Toby Lister) – continued their dominance of Australia’s premier rowing event, the King’s Cup, with yet another win over arch rivals Victoria at the Sydney International Regatta Centre on March 23.

SWIMMERS IN NATIONAL
Six Sydney University swimmers were rewarded for their exceptional performances at April’s 2013 Swimming Championships in Adelaide, when they were named in Swimming Australia’s various teams. Matt Abood (2013 World Championships), Sarah Rose, Sarah Hilt (Australia A), Hayley White, Andrew Abood and Keiran Qaium (World University Games) competed in national teams later in 2013.

SYDNEY SHINES ON WORLD STAGE
Competing at the second-largest sporting event in the world by participation at July’s 27th Summer Universiade (World University Games), Sydney Uni’s Andrew Abood (swimming silver), Hayley White (swimming bronze), Katie-Rae Ebzery (basketball bronze) and Ian Dewhurst (athletics bronze) all experienced podium conclusions in Russia.

WATER POLO SILVER
The Australian Women’s Water Polo team, featuring three Sydney Uni Women’s Water Polo Club representatives – Hannah Buckling, Keesja Gofers and Lea Barta – finished runners-up at the World Championships in Barcelona, going down 8-6 to host nation Spain in the final which was held on August 2.

GRIDIRON CLUB VICTORY
The Sydney University Lions crowned their unbroken run of 10 straight NSW Waratah Bowl titles when they won the inaugural American Football National Club Championship on August 11. The Lions thrashed reigning Queensland champions the Gold Coast Stingrays 45-13. In December, the Lions went on to win their 11th straight Waratah Bowl and their 97th consecutive win.

WORDS
ANDREW TILLEY
SMART THINKING
Leading writer David Malouf was guest curator of a recent exhibition at the University of the art of leading Australian artist Jeffrey Smart. He shares his intimate knowledge of Smart’s work.
sydney.edu.au/sam/second-look

LIFE OF LUXURY
Economics graduate Philip Corne, CEO of Louis Vuitton Oceania, shares the philosophy and wisdom that have seen him rise to the top of the luxury goods company.
sydney.edu.au/sam/second-look

GIANT LEAPS IN NANO
Associate Professor Fariba Dehghani, a chemical engineer, has achieved astonishing results in two very different areas of research using nanotechnology.
sydney.edu.au/sam/second-look

CARDIOLOGIST’S PARTY TRICK
Professor David Celermajer poses a quick quiz for his audience: he shows them a slide of a person with a big lump of cholesterol in their heart, and asks how old the person is.
sydney.edu.au/sam/second-look

BASEBALL HISTORY
Sydney Uni Baseball Club secured the Club Championship for the first time since 1984 and only the second time since 1914, when they swept UNSW in the final round of the Sydney Winter Baseball League on August 11. Second grade and third grade went on win Premierships, while First Grade finished as grand final runners-up.

RUGBY CLUB WINS AGAIN
Sydney University Football Club (SUFC) saved their best for last when they won an eighth Sydney Rugby Union Shute Shield competition in their past nine outings with a 51-6 effort over Eastwood at Concord Oval on September 14. It was a fitting end to SUFC’s 150th anniversary celebrations and the conclusion of outstanding careers for Tim Davidson and Tom Carter.

WOMEN’S HOCKEY DOUBLE
Sydney University claimed back-to-back Metro League 1 titles in Sydney’s premier women’s hockey competition when they defeated arch-rivals Briars 2-0 on the Olympic pitch at Homebush on September 15.

THIRD IN UNIVERSITY GAMES
Sydney University maintained its enviable record of finishing in the top three in every Australian University Games (AUG) since their inception in 1993, after securing a third place finish on the Gold Coast in October’s 2013 Games. There were exceptional results achieved in a number of sports including athletics, cycling, women’s football, women’s taekwondo, women’s touch football and rowing.

ATHLETICS RELAY SUCCESS
Celebrating their 135th Anniversary, the Sydney University Athletics Club (SUAC) produced the most dominant display of track running in NSW Relay Championship history, winning 11 gold medals, two silver and one bronze out of the possible 14 track races in the open division. It was a record breaking weekend of the highest order – two Australian club records, two NSW records, a NSW club record and six SUAC club records were smashed at Sydney Olympic Park Athletics Centre (SOPAC) on November 23 and 24.

BIKE RACE TRIUMPH
After taking up co-naming rights on a women’s team in October, the Roxsold Sydney Uni team won the 2013 Logie-Smith Lanyon Super Criterium in Melbourne just a month later. With the help of her teammates, Sydney Uni’s Chloe Hosking delivered a convincing two bike-length victory.
1960s

**DR TIM BLASHKI (MBBS ’64)** trained in psychiatry and subsequently practised in analytic therapy and held posts at several teaching hospitals in Melbourne. In the early 1980s he began to draw and to paint, becoming increasingly interested in the image as a representation of the internal world. Over the next 30 years he produced many thousands of sketches and cartoons, some of which are in this most recent exhibition in Melbourne, *Beyond Words*. Blashki uses symbolic imagery to depict aspects of the mind and states of consciousness. He retired from psychiatric practice in 2009 and has since pursued his interest in art full time.

**LIZ PARKINSON (BEC ’69)** also completed Fine Arts 1 in its inaugural year in 1968 and graduated in 1978 with a Dip Ed from Newcastle University. After a teaching career, during which she wrote and illustrated three books, today she works full-time as an artist and has had many exhibitions of her drawings and masks both in Australia and abroad. A highlight was having some work purchased by the Collection de L’Art Brut in Lausanne in Switzerland. Last November there was an exhibition of her work at the Callan Park Gallery in Rozelle. Also in 2013 her work was included in shows in London, Amsterdam and Croatia. This year she will be taking her work to New Zealand and is illustrating a children’s book.

1980s

**JIM TAYLOR (MEd ’80),** Emeritus Professor at the University of Southern Queensland since 2012, he has been conferred with the title of Honorary Fellow of the Commonwealth of Learning in recognition of his many contributions to higher education, distance education and open education resources. The title was awarded at the seventh Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning held in Abuja, Nigeria in December. Over the years, Professor Taylor’s expertise in open and distance learning has been used by international agencies ranging from the World Bank to UNESCO.

**MICHELA LEDWIDGE (BA ’93)** has directed interactive video installation, ACO VIRTUAL. The installation was part of the Sydney Opera House’s 40th birthday celebrations last October, before continuing its tour of Australia. The project is a world-first innovation and an artistic collaboration between Michela’s studio and the Australian Chamber Orchestra. ACO VIRTUAL allows audiences to explore and play with the orchestra and its music, spotlighting individual musicians or sections via a touchscreen controller. Michela majored in French and Computer Science and her thesis was on the use of the web for artistic projects.

**ELLA DREYFUS (Grad Dip SCA ’90)** recently graduated with a PhD from the College of Fine Arts at the University of NSW, joining her aunt Dr Kay Dreyfus and sister Dr Shoshana Dreyfus, as the third member of the Dreyfus family to complete a doctoral degree. Ella Dreyfus, currently Senior Lecturer and Head of Public Programs at the National Art School in Sydney, is an award-winning artist, known for her photographic exhibitions and monographs, including *The Body Pregnant*. Sister Shoshana is a lecturer in the Department of Linguistics, Faculty of Arts at Sydney. She completed her PhD at the University of Wollongong in 2007. Dr Kay Dreyfus completed a Master of Music and PhD at the University of Melbourne and a second doctorate, in history at Monash University.

2010s

**MARY FAITH (MMus Stud ’11),** Head Teacher of the Visual Arts Dept at Abbotsleigh School in Sydney for many years, she put in a proposal to the school to create an art gallery, workshop and teaching space in an old boarding house at Wahroonga on the upper north shore. The refurbished building was opened by NSW Premier Barry O’Farrell in October, and the opening exhibition was titled *Mentors: Inspirational Women.*
TUESDAY 25 MARCH
Sydney Ideas – Philosophy in the age of democracy
Law School Foyer, 6 – 7.30pm
University of Sydney Professor of Philosophy Paul Redding leads a forum discussing the pre-election comments made last year about federal funding for philosophy research. More: www.sydney.edu.au/sydney_ideas

WEDNESDAY 26 MARCH
Sydney Ideas and Faculty of Health Sciences Lecture – Sugar-Sweetened Schools: A Supply Chain to Childhood Obesity?
Law School Foyer, 6 – 7.30pm
Dr Kieron Rooney, co-presented with Jo Gardner, Chief Executive, Healthy Kids Association. More: www.sydney.edu.au/sydney_ideas

THURSDAY 27 MARCH
The J M Ward Memorial Lecture
Law School Foyer, 6 – 7.30pm
Professor Sheila Fitzpatrick reflects on her experiences in Cold War Moscow in the 1960s with a lecture on ‘Writing Memoirs, Writing History’. More: www.sydney.edu.au/sydney_ideas

THURSDAY, 3 APRIL
University of Sydney Business School - Connect over Cocktails
University of Sydney Business School CBD Campus, Level 17, 133 Castlereagh Street, Sydney, 6-8pm
With guest speaker Angus Harris, Co-CEO, Harris Farm Markets. Email business.alumnievents@sydney.edu.au to register your interest in attending.

WEDNESDAY 9 APRIL
Golden Graduates Luncheon
The Great Hall, 12 – 3pm
Luncheon for all alumni who graduated from the University 50 or more years ago. sydney.edu.au/alumni/golden

WEDNESDAY 30 APRIL
Faculty of Health Sciences Dean’s Breakfast Reception
MacLaurin Hall, Camperdown Campus, 7.30 – 9am
Further enquiries: Maria Humphreys, Alumni Relations Manager, at maria.humphreys@sydney.edu.au

THURSDAY 8 MAY
Insights lecture series
Nicholson Museum and General Lecture Theatre 1, The Quadrangle, The University of Sydney

THURSDAY 15 MAY
Sydney Ideas – Black Holes
Law Lecture Theatre LT 101, 6pm
The 2014 School of Physics’ Walter Stibbs lecture is presented by Fulvio Melia, Professor of Physics and Astronomy at the University of Arizona (US). More: www.sydney.edu.au/sydney_ideas

FRIDAY 23 MAY
Canberra Alumni Drinks
The Brassey Hotel, Barton, Canberra, 6-8pm
Registration and enquiries, alumni.canberra@sydney.edu.au

TUESDAY 27 MAY
Flag Raising ceremony and Sea of Hands Launch for National Reconciliation Week
Front Lawns, The University of Sydney, 12.30 – 2pm
For more information, visit sydney.edu.au/alumni/events/reconciliation_week

THURSDAY 5 JUNE
Insights lecture series
Nicholson Museum and General Lecture Theatre 1, The Quadrangle, University of Sydney
Rococo Aesthetics. Professor of Art History and 18-Century Studies, Jennifer Milam. Enquiries and registration 02 9351 7454 and sydney.edu.au/alumni/insights2014

MONDAY 30 JUNE
USUKAA Summer Reception
The House of Lords, London, 6 – 8pm
With special guest speaker Belinda Hutchinson AM, Chancellor
For enquiries, please contact alumni.uk@sydney.edu.au

KEEP UP TO DATE
There’s always lots going on in and around the University – too much to fit it all in here! So stay up to date with alumni events and more via our online event calendar – sydney.edu.au/events
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Also, make sure that we have your latest contact details (you can do this online at sydney.edu.au/stayconnected) so that you receive our monthly eSydney email newsletter, as well as invitations to events in your local area.
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ALUMNI REUNIONS
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If you would like help arranging your own reunion, contact us at events.assistant@sydney.edu.au
Like most Sydney graduates, Daniel Stacey (BA Hon ’05) will never forget his favourite teacher. Describing the classes of Professor Paul Redding from the Department of Philosophy as nothing short of transformative, Stacey was appalled to find the research of his former honours supervisor very publicly targeted by the Coalition’s Scrutiny of Government Waste Committee last September.

“The Coalition would look to targeting those ridiculous research grants that leave taxpayers scratching their heads wondering just what the Government was thinking,” said head of the Committee, Federal MP Jamie Briggs, singling out Professor Redding’s Australian Research Council (ARC) project, *The God of Hegel’s Post-Kantian idealism*, as one of the worst offenders.

Stacey, the Editor of ABC Radio National Online, took to his regular column on Fairfax’s *Daily Life* website to discuss just how valuable philosophical research and education have been to him in his professional life, and also to those of our most influential politicians and leaders – including Tony Abbott himself.

**What prompted you to write the article?**

I wanted to talk about my personal experiences of studying philosophy, its practical applications, and its importance to intellectual and political life.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott is himself from an intellectual background. In his autobiography, *Battlelines*, and in profiles like David Marr’s essay *Political Animal*, it’s clear that [Australian political activist and journalist] B A Santamaria’s modern compassionate Catholicism, as well as the Thatcherite economic theory Abbott was exposed to at Oxford, have both played a large role in defining his political outlook. Both these strands draw from a rich tradition of Western Philosophy. Margaret Thatcher herself drew heavily on economist philosophers like Friedrich Hayek.

There will always be a need for philosophy. In a hypothetical universe where philosophy as a discipline was erased, it would regenerate pretty well immediately. Smart people would find themselves facing intractable problems in trying to run modern states, modern businesses, and in navigating their everyday lives. They would set up institutes and think tanks to solve these problems. Those groups would run in to bigger problems, and they would set up philosophy departments to solve them.

That is pretty well, on the back of a napkin, how many universities were established, as existing religious orders (Oxford) and legal schools (Bologna) outgrew their original purpose. Renaissance thinking likewise encouraged rulers to consider a thirst for knowledge as something that enriched the whole of society, and so to fund universities. Nothing much has changed, and that these values remain enshrined in the ARC grant system should surprise no one.

**How did your time at university prepare you for your career?**

After finishing my honours thesis under Professor Redding, I moved to London and started a publishing business. Philosophy gave me the confidence to look at problems across a range of fields, from fine-tuning the ideas of writers and other contributors to the magazine we published, to pitching for business and developing major creative projects with partners like the Victoria & Albert Museum and Channel 4. I also reviewed literature for *The Australian* across Europe, and associate produced the Emmy Award-winning film *Saddam’s Road to Hell*, which was later used as evidence against deposed president Hussein in his trial for human rights abuses.

Philosophy trains you to think critically, and to be confident exploring new subject areas. At the same time, it forces you to express yourself as clearly as possible.

Philosophy is misunderstood by a large part of the population and unfairly victimised. It doesn’t seem tangible, although it is.

One way I think philosophy can demonstrate its influence in the real world is not through new technology, or culture, but through people. By observing the leadership choices of people informed by philosophy, we can see it in action.
For the benefit of future generations, Russell Robertson (BEc ’44, DipEd ’48, BA ’50), is investing in the Macleay Museum, Nicholson Museum and the University Art Gallery, through a bequest in his will.

You too can help us to shape a better Australia.

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