

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

Bulletin

OCTOBER 2004

Sports Management Scores
EXPORT GOAL



THE WEB

Getting it Your Way

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LANGUAGES, GENES, AND PREHISTORY

How did the English language arrive in Great Britain? How does 'language' develop among any of the diverse cultures that inhabit this planet today?

Few people in the world have made as much sense of this 'tower of babble' as Bernard Comrie – a man described by his colleagues as the 'Linguists' linguist'.

Extending linguistics into archaeology and psychology – and exploring its connection with genetics – Professor Comrie recently visited La Trobe University's Research Centre for Linguistic Typology where he gave a public lecture titled: *Languages, Genes, and Prehistory*.

Professor Comrie said one of the most important tasks facing linguists today is the preservation of endangered languages – which is also one of the main roles of La Trobe University's Research Centre for Linguistic Typology.

Professor Comrie is Director at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany, and Research Professor at the University of California at Santa Barbara, US. He said inter-disciplinary research was bringing together linguists, geneticists, and archaeologists and is throwing new light on 'hitherto intractable questions relating to prehistoric human population movements'.

To illustrate, he used four case studies: the origin of the Haruai people of Papua New Guinea; the arrival of Turkic languages in Azerbaijan; the Indo-Europeanisation of Europe; and possible scenarios for the arrival of the English language in Great Britain.

While at La Trobe, Professor Comrie was also awarded the degree Doctor of Letters (*honoris causa*). Head of La Trobe University's Research Centre for Linguistic Typology, Professor Bob Dixon, said for several decades now the first name linguists think of in connection



with linguistic typology is Bernard Comrie.

'No one has done more to advance our understanding of the nature of the human language and its cognitive basis. No other linguist has exhibited such breadth of interest or made such incisive contributions to the field,' Professor Dixon said.

Professor Comrie has written nine books, and his texts are key reference works for linguistics the world over. A leading expert on Russian and other Slavic languages, Professor Comrie wrote *The Languages of the Soviet Union* for the Cambridge Language Survey series, outlining main features of Turkic, Mongolian, Tungusic, Uralic, Indo-European, Caucasian and Paleo-Siberian languages.

In Leningrad, he worked with speakers of Chukchee and other minority languages of the old Soviet Union. He has undertaken extensive fieldwork in Papua New Guinea on Haruai, and most recently he has done field work on Tsez, from the north-east Caucasian family.

Other languages on which he has published include Finnish, Tatar, Turkish, Basque, German, Dutch, Polish, Macedonian, Brazilian Portuguese, Galician, Hindi, Armenian, Yiddish, Maltese, Arabic, Yukaghir, Kamchadal, Ket, Gokana, Huichol, Piaiwi, Khmer, Malayalam, and Kalaw Lagaw Ya, the language of the Western Torres Strait. ■

PIONEERING A NEW EXPORT INDUSTRY

Sports management scores goal in Emirates

Sports management specialists from La Trobe University are helping pioneer a new Australian export industry – marketing Australia’s sports management expertise overseas.

Dr Hans Westerbeek and Dr Aaron Smith, Associate Professors in the School of Sport, Tourism and Hospitality Management, have completed a six-month contract with a major professional soccer club in Abu Dhabi, capital of the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

They say Australia’s international reputation for state-of-the-art sports administration – greatly enhanced by our success at the Athens Olympic Games – gives Australia an edge in this growing industry.

‘Many developing countries have little or no tradition in playing and organising sport. With sport becoming a more vital element in governments’ attempt of nation building, and a very benign way of uniting their people, Australia has much to teach the world.

‘We have played sport for 200 years and it has become a way of life, envied by people in other countries. Over those two centuries we have built up expertise in sports management that other countries, particularly in Asia and the Middle East, simply do not have.’

Their contract with the Federal Government of the UAE was to help the Al

Jazira Soccer Club become more professional in its management and organisation, and to develop talent identification systems for the club to become more competitive on the field.

Beyond that, Drs Westerbeek and Smith say the UAE Government also wants to employ sport to communicate national pride, identify the nation to the rest of the world, and use the club as a sporting hub for the region.

Apart from camel racing and falconry, the government has no sporting tradition on which it can call. So they looked overseas and, after considering the USA, decided on Australian-based expertise.

Drs Westerbeek and Smith, with research partners in Sydney, recently completed the first stage, submitting their report on strategic planning. They hope to receive future contracts to carry out aspects of that planning program.

They spent a week every two months during the contract period in Abu Dhabi, pursuing two lines of activity.

‘We attempted to identify what the club’s brand name, Al Jazira – “The Island” in Arabic – meant to local people, and how this brand name could be enhanced to increase its commercial value.’

The second was purely practical: to guide the club from being an insular soccer-focused organisation to a

community-driven institution beyond soccer or other sports. This included outlining the community-building benefits of sport such as building bridges between the club and primary and secondary schools and assisting the club in organising community events such as fun runs, in order to make the club and its brand more ‘relevant’ to the community.

Dr Westerbeek and Dr Smith run the sport and leisure management courses in the school of Sport, Tourism and Hospitality Management. ■

Games round off a sporting year

‘LET THE GAMES BEGIN’ may be only a memory in Athens ... but not at La Trobe University which is about to play a key role in the Commonwealth Youth Games in Bendigo late this year.

And the University has also just finished hosting the Malaysian Students’ Council of Australia Games on its Bundoora campus.

La Trobe is the first Official Partner of the Bendigo 2004 Commonwealth Youth Games. Its campus will be used for the athletes’ village, media centre, and will serve as the venue for the weightlifting competition.

The University will help cater for more than 1,000 athletes and officials from 24 countries competing in ten sports from November 30 to December 4.

It will also run a polyclinic for the games, staffed by La Trobe physiotherapists and podiatrists who will supervise a team of some 20 senior students as part of their clinical placements.

Bendigo City Councillor, Cr Alan Besley, Chair of the Games Organising Committee, welcomed La Trobe as an Official Games Partner.

Continued page 4

Dr Westerbeek, left, and Dr Smith: Sport is becoming a more vital element in nation-building.



Continued from page 3

He said the University was an important part of the Bendigo community. 'The contribution La Trobe will make to the Games is fantastic and I am looking forward to working with it in order to put on a fantastic event.'

Pro Vice-Chancellor (Bendigo), Professor Peter Sullivan, said La Trobe was eager to support the Games. 'As a University committed to this region, we are immensely happy to see an event of this stature come to Central Victoria and look forward to providing support.'

THE UNIVERSITY ALSO HOSTED and served as 'Gold Sponsor' for the Malaysian Students' Council of Australia Games and Conference held on La Trobe's main Melbourne campus at Bundoora from 27 to 29 September.

The event was attended by more than 300 students from seven states. Seven sports were featured in the games - from soccer and basketball to badminton and table tennis. Organiser, Belinda Lim, said the event promoted the spirit of Malaysia among Malaysian students and the wider Australian community.

The conference theme was: *Melbourne 2004: Community, Diversity and Unity*. Dignitaries at the presentation night included the Malaysian High Commissioner to Australia, Mr Hussin Nayan, and the Director of the Malaysian Students' Department in Australia, Mr Musa Mansor. ■

Round Table looks at regional universities

La Trobe University – with the largest number of regional university campuses in Victoria – recently hosted the Victorian Regional Engagement Forum of the national Business/Higher Education Round Table.

Director of Business Development at La Trobe, Bendigo, Mr David Ensor, said more than 160 people attended the forum, opened by State Treasurer and Minister for Innovation, Industry and Regional Development, Mr John Brumby.

The forum was addressed by business, education and community leaders including State Education Minister and local MHR, Ms Jacinta Allan. It recognised the pivotal role played by higher education, industry, and business in regional development and in retaining young people in regional areas.

Mr Ensor said La Trobe had invested a great deal in regional community development programs and was pleased to be chosen to host the forum.

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Michael Osborne, one of the keynote speakers, said that a regional university, even if it was new and small, should not differ in any essential way from the 'Idea of a University' generally.

'It should exhibit the same core attributes that define any university, whilst of course maintaining additional features appropriate to its location and social setting. The recent move to essentially public universities with broad and relatively transparent criteria for

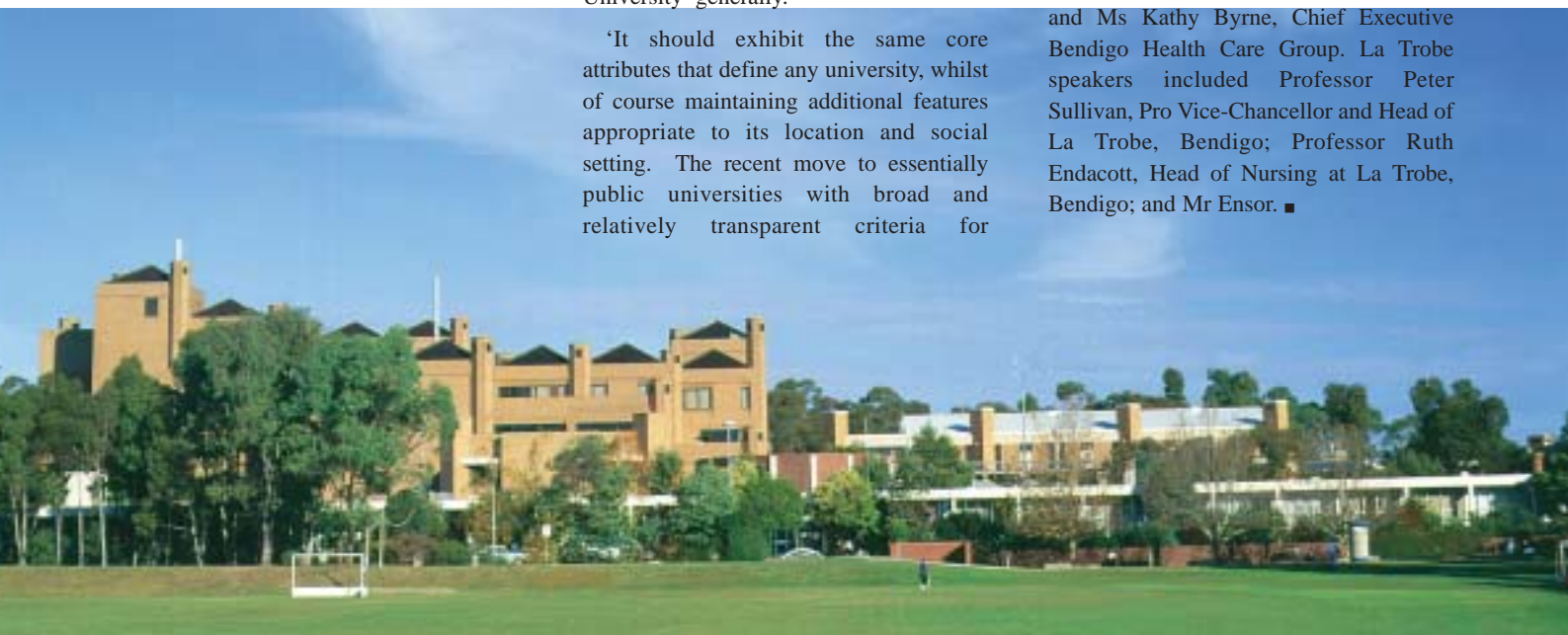
admission with a strong suite of vocational programs – and very recently in Australia the experiment of taking higher education to regional centres rather than bringing regional students to the metropolis – can all be encompassed within such a broad vision,' he said.

'Universities need to argue persuasively for a blend of the traditional and the utilitarian on the grounds that society needs intellectuals and intelligent citizens as well as experts in specific fields; and universities should enrich society as a whole, not just the work-related aspects.

'At La Trobe University we are seeking to pursue this blend and it is a defining feature of the University. The community has a right to expect the University to respect and promote local aspirations,' Professor Osborne concluded.

'By the same token, the community should recognise that a university has, and needs to retain, certain attributes in terms of the pursuit of learning if it is to deserve and keep the title of university.'

Other key speakers included Professor Ashley Goldsworthy, Executive Director, Business Higher Education Round Table; Mr Derek de Vrieze, Chair Central Victorian Business Network; and Ms Kathy Byrne, Chief Executive Bendigo Health Care Group. La Trobe speakers included Professor Peter Sullivan, Pro Vice-Chancellor and Head of La Trobe, Bendigo; Professor Ruth Endacott, Head of Nursing at La Trobe, Bendigo; and Mr Ensor. ■



**It's compulsory.
A new unit
teaches all
La Trobe
Health
Sciences
graduates:**

UNDERSTAND YOUR FELLOW HEALTH PROFESSIONAL

La Trobe University is helping the many specialisations within the Australian health care profession to work better together.

The first 400 students recently completed a new subject entitled 'Interdisciplinary Professional Practice'. Compulsory in the final year of the University's eight Health Sciences degree courses, the unit is designed to encourage cross-discipline and understanding among all areas of the health professions.

Dean of Health Sciences, Professor Stephen Duckett, says: 'This is the first time to our knowledge that a university has

given health science students the opportunity to acquire in-depth knowledge of important aspects, including the problems, faced by colleagues in other branches of the profession.'

Schools in the Faculty of Health Sciences have worked together for two years to develop the unit.

Senior lecturer in Social Work and Social Policy, Dr Helen Cleak – a members of the co-ordinating committee – says all undergraduate students in health information management, public health, podiatry, orthoptics, prosthetics and orthotics, physiotherapy, social work, occupational therapy, speech pathology and nursing will complete the unit.

They work online in small groups from all health professions, forming their own

'departments' in which they use their skills and knowledge to solve the sorts of problems they will confront when they graduate.

Except for an orientation session, all work is online – making it the largest online subject at the University. Students from the Bundoora and Albury-Wodonga campuses interacted this year, and next year, Bendigo and Mildura students will also enroll.

Dr Cleak says students meet in 'chat rooms' and cover topics such as the structure and funding of the health and welfare system, professional ethics, health-related legislation, professional development, quality improvement in health care, and evidence based practice in clinical work. ■

La Trobe PhD students win double award

In 2004, for the first time, the Sir Robert Menzies Memorial Foundation awarded two Research Scholarships in the Allied Health Sciences instead of one – and both went to La Trobe University. A total of 37 applications from PhD students all over Australia applied for the two scholarships which were won by La Trobe physiotherapy students, Ms Simone O'Shea and Ms Fiona Smithson.

'It is just a co-incidence that both went to students from La Trobe University. We examined each application on its merits,' said a spokesperson for the Sir Robert Menzies Foundation.

The research scholarships, valued at \$25,000 per annum for each of two years, are open to graduates in any of the health sciences who have enrolled for a PhD in an Australian university and who have completed the first stage of their doctoral program.

The Foundation's final selection committee and assessors grade the applications in terms of topic, relevance and methodology. The de-identified applications from 37 candidates were sent out to the discipline assessors in physiotherapy, speech pathology, psychology, nursing, podiatry, human movement studies and occupational therapy. Reports from referees nominated by these candidates were also requested.

Ms O'Shea is investigating the role of strength training in cardiopulmonary rehabilitation under the supervision of Dr Nicholas Taylor, and Ms Smithson is investigating the classification of cerebral palsy gait, under the supervision of Professor Meg Morris. ■





Ms Hendry:
Norwegian grant
for prototype.

EXACT BREATH OF LIFE

New technology to improve the accuracy and safety of a device used to train doctors and nurses in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) has been developed by La Trobe Bachelor of Electronic Engineering and Master of Biomedical Engineering student, Rebecca Hendry.

Norway's Laerdal Foundation has granted Ms Hendry \$10,000 to have the first prototype ready by the end of this year.

Called 'Flexible Instrument for Resuscitation Simulated Training' (FIRST) the equipment is fitted to Resusci Baby, a Norwegian-manufactured soft plastic 'manikin' the size and shape of a new-born full-term baby. It is part of a range of manikins, from babies to children and adults, used by trainee health workers, lifeguards and first-aiders to learn correct resuscitation techniques.

Ms Hendry says trainees hold a mask over the manikin's face attached to a self inflating bag which, when squeezed, puts pressure into the lungs and expands them – the equivalent of a breath of air.

Two techniques can be used: one involving two fingers to depress one third of the chest and a second, using two thumbs to stimulate the heart if it has

stopped. Currently, the only way trainees can gauge the effect of their CPR technique on the manikin's 'lungs' is by watching the level to which the chest has expanded.

Ms Hendry's electronic device – which contains three pressure sensors, one differential and two absolute, and a depth sensor – will do this more accurately, ensuring that the lungs have been properly filled with air, and that the chest has been compressed by the required one-third to stimulate the heart. The device is linked to a computer where the resuscitation is evaluated using wave forms and statistics, information that can be saved if a record is required.

Once students have developed their skill on the Resusci Baby, they can graduate to working with live patients in the knowledge that their technique is good.

Ms Hendry says she developed the idea for her device while doing industry experience at the Royal Women's Hospital. The project is supervised by La Trobe lecturer in Electronic Engineering, Dr Paul Junor.

Ms Hendry was also recently appointed as the student representative for Victoria on the Society for Medical and Biological Engineers. ■

Student mission to Mars

Victorian school children can take part in a Mariner or Viking space mission to Mars following the development of simulation software by La Trobe University's Department of Computer Science and Computer Engineering.

Four La Trobe computer students, Patrick Oppenlander, Ashley Mallia, Lorien Dunn and Daniel Delaney developed the package for the Victorian Space Science Education Centre (VSSEC) at Strathmore Secondary College.

Their supervisor, senior lecturer Dr John Rankin, said there are two separate simulations, one for Mariner and the other for Viking and each takes half a day. Students play the role of six astronauts and six operators in the mission control space centre.

Mr Phillip Spencer, VSSEC Project Director, said the students work in teams on experiments to determine whether there is, or has been, life on Mars. The software also tests students' problem solving abilities when they encounter a variety of situations including dust storms and radiation exposure.

'The package provides simulated data, and an interface for real data that shows the astronauts' biological functions – heart rate, blood pressure and respiratory functioning – as well as other physiological factors as they complete their tasks,' he said.

'The program allows us to develop a range of different scenarios so that each mission can be different. The anomalies can be pre-programmed or can be left up to the educator in charge.' ■



Getting it *your* way

Information from the world-wide web

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY has played a prominent role in redesigning the technology of the world-wide web to ensure it meets the needs of many more users.

Liddy Nevile, Adjunct Associate Professor in Computer Science and Computer Engineering, is a member of a global community headed by the inventor of the world-wide web, Sir Tim Berners-Lee, which is improving web technology.

The latest technology – expected to be published as an International Standards Organisation standard early next year – continues ten years' work and has been recognised as the standard for education.

It is also being reviewed for recommendation as a 'Dublin Core specification' for use in other areas, including business.

'From now on,' says Ms Nevile, 'people with disabilities or with different needs should be able to access the web in the way that most suits them. Until now, technology simply did not exist for this.'

Thirty years ago computers were relatively 'simple' devices, but enormously beneficial for people with disabilities and special needs because information was relatively easy to access. For instance, blind people could access text as Braille or audio.

'But as computers have become more complex – initially with the introduction of the mouse and later with the arrival of laptops, mobile phones, hand-held wireless, and other devices – it has become harder for those with disabilities, even for older people with minor problems like frail hands,' Ms Nevile says.

'Sadly, those for whom the computer was initially an enormous asset were "dumped" when the web suddenly became the main distribution channel for most digital material.

'Being able to click on a link, which made the web so attractive to many, is almost impossible for people with motor co-ordination or vision problems. Information can also be inaccessible to people with hearing problems or slow

telecommunications connections.

'Others with special needs were also adversely affected. For example some people need access via small hand-held devices, or their mobile phones, but may need a large clear font when presenting the same materials in a classroom. Within a couple of years, the web alienated many people from the workforce and education.'

Ms Nevile works under the auspices of the IMS Global Learning Consortium, the Dublin Core Metadata Initiative, and other organisations including the W3C Web Accessibility Initiative of Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

We did this by working out how to describe the composition of the content. It is not unlike a library catalogue. And, like its predecessor, it is in a standard form that can be used and exchanged by everyone.

'The next step was to describe people's needs and preferences for receiving this information – needs which may change depending on circumstances. For example, while in your office you may want voice information, but when you are working in a library you want the same information as text. Then we developed a system that allows users to have different profiles for different contexts and to change these to suit their circumstances. Typically, a blind



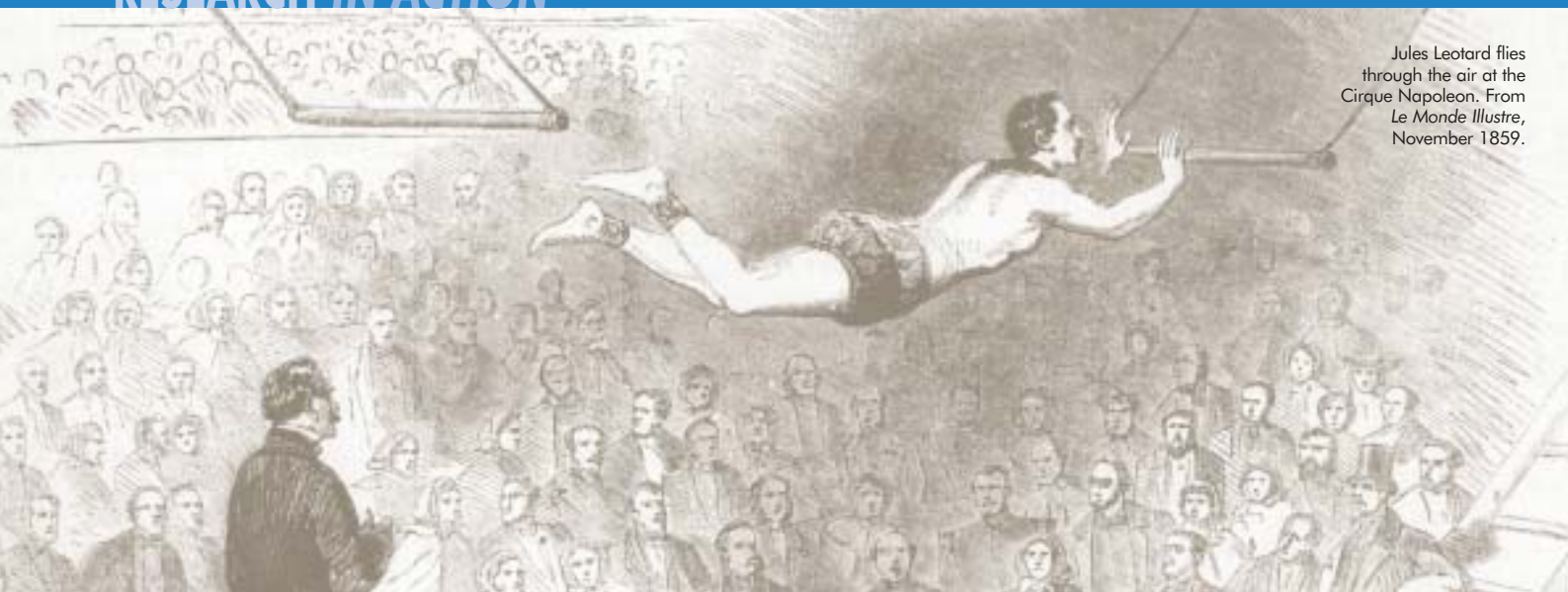
Ms Nevile: a new specification.

With colleagues, including Professor Jutta Treviranus of Toronto University, she developed a new specification to ensure that more people can access the digital resources they seek, and in the way they require. For example, this often means no images, but text-only for those with vision disabilities.

'Basically the new technology tells people where the materials they seek are located and how to avoid other materials.

user will need to have images and videos replaced by descriptive text before being given the resource.'

The new technology and matching system will be discussed at the Australian Web Accessibility Initiatives Conference in December at La Trobe University. Professor Treviranus will be a keynote speaker. ■



BLURRING GENDER ON A FLYING TRAPEZE

It must be one of the great ironies in the history of the entertainment industry.

A man is famous and admired for his bravery, initiative and daring in his lifetime. But nearly a century and a half since the height of his fame, he is remembered for only one thing: his pants.

Such is the fate of the father of trapeze, Frenchman Jules Leotard, whose body-hugging colourful outfit is still the uniform of choice of dancers, circus performers and others involved in agile public activities.

As the first 'flyer' in the history of trapeze, the handsome Frenchman figures prominently in the ARC-funded Discovery project by La Trobe University Professor of Theatre and Drama, Peta Tait. Professor Tait is a world authority on gender 'blurring' in performance which led her to detailed studies of male and female figures in 19th and 20th century circus and theatre.

Her research examines the development of trapeze acts. It fits in well with the subject of gender blurring because trapeze artists must possess the feminine characteristics of lithe grace and smooth movement with the masculine characteristics of strength, power and bravery.

The very muscular, very sexy young Jules Leotard was a perfect example of this. From the time he performed the first flying

trapeze act in a Paris theatre 1859, demure, blushing 19th century ladies, steeped in the modesty of their age, nonetheless fought for front row seats to watch his scantily-clad body fly through the air.

It was not long before he had many imitators who, unlike Leotard, may not have had a devoted mother to design and make the skin-tight pants which contributed so much to his early popularity.

Young Jules leapt between two trapezes hanging five metres above the stage and later astounded audiences by a new trick – turning a somersault in mid-air. Over the years the height of the trapeze above stage has increased and additional somersaults have been added until the act has reached the high flying version we know today. Leotard's act soon spread from theatre to the fixed location European circuses where he and his contemporary, high wire performer, Blondin were the idols.

Leotard performed until 1868 by which time women trapeze artists – wearing Leotard's by now classical outfit – had entered the field.

Leotard's act and his outfit quickly spread from Europe. By 1863 Australia's first trapeze artist, Charles Perry, was wowing audiences. Among the most famous trapeze artists were members of the Codonas family from Mexico who dominated the trapeze world for most of the 20th century.

Flyer Alfredo Codonas and his catcher brother Lalo, performed with the Australian Wirth's Circus for three years from 1913 and then joined the famous Ringling Bros. Barnum and Bailey circus in the USA.

It was in Australia that Alfredo pioneered the triple somersault. He was also the stunt man for Johnny Weissmuller in two Tarzan films in the mid 1930s. In Australia, Alfredo had met Australian 'flyer' Vera Bruce and later married her. Famously, he murdered her and then killed himself in California in 1937.

Codonas talked about how muscle power and psychology mingled and how this early form of sports psychology could lead to improved performance – for example the development of the triple somersault. He believed you had to train the mind to work with the body to enable it to perform more difficult tricks.

Professor Tait says that Australia's Circus Oz, with the French Canadian circus Cirque de Soleil and the French Cirque Archchaos, have developed new forms of aerial work. A La Trobe University PhD student, Ms Jane Mullett, is researching the beginnings of the new kind of animal-free circuses like Circus Oz.

Professor Tait expects her book *Circus Bodies: Cultural Identity in Aerial Performance* to be published in mid 2005. ■

Overcoming communication problems with

The sound of music

MUSIC AND DANCING have inherent appeal to young children. The reaction of even tiny toddlers to the music and movement of Australia's internationally famous Wiggles illustrates this.

Now a La Trobe University speech pathology researcher, Dr Beverly Joffe, has used this phenomenon as a tool to help kids with speech, language and communication problems.

She has shown that by using both music and movement as 'teaching' tools, she improved the speech performance of 19 children from three to seven years old undergoing treatment at La Trobe's Communication Clinic.

Dr Joffe presented evidence of her success at the recent 26th World Congress of the International Association of Logopedics and Phoniatrics in Brisbane at which about 30 countries were represented.

The research stems from Dr Joffe's doctoral thesis, *A complementary form of speech language intervention: Can music and movement help children with communication disorders?*

A lecturer in La Trobe's School of Human Communication Sciences, she says her research has demonstrated the value for children of treatment programs that combine traditional speech pathology treatment strategies with the structured use of music and movement.

Her doctoral research established support for what she describes as 'integrative, multi-modal treatment' that takes into account kinesics, proxemics and rhythm.

The research was conducted under the supervision of Professor Bridie Raban of the Department of Learning and Educational Development at the University of Melbourne, and Dr Karen Bond, Associate Professor in the Department of Dance at Temple University, Philadelphia.

Nineteen children, who had a variety of communication disorders each participated, on average, in 15 individual treatment sessions in which music and movement were combined with conventional treatment. Another four children participated as controls, being given only conventional treatment.

The research had two major phases. The first, in which four children participated, involved developing, applying and evaluating the program. In the second phase, a further 19 children participated, 15 of them in the combined music-movement plus traditional speech pathology treatment, and four children, given only traditional speech pathology treatment to provide perspective against which to view gains made by the other 15.

Measures of speech, language and related behaviours were taken before, during and after treatment, and obtained via standardised tests, formalised samples, probes, videotapes, written clinician reflections, parent questionnaires, and computer programs.

'We found that movement can be linked with speech sound features,' Dr Joffe said. For example, hopping whilst singing a fast song with particular words could highlight certain sounds.

'Similarly, vocabulary or grammatical concepts could be made more salient for the child through accompanying movements or gestures. In addition music and movement also helped children produce co-ordinated sequences like multisyllabic words.

'Music helped in other ways. Restless and particularly active children do not like being kept still for conventional treatment. Also, shy, uncommunicative and hesitant kids can be uncomfortable in small spaces, with a constant demand for verbal interaction. Other children with low boredom thresholds may not tolerate certain seated activities.

'Learning new speech motor and language behaviours needs considerable practice, and it is not straightforward to put repetition into practice in traditional treatment while maintaining a naturalistic non-demanding situation. Music helped considerably, and assisted in association and anticipation.'

The La Trobe Communication Clinic now provides this approach to treating children with communication disorders. ■



Inter-cultural dialogue

PLANNING FOR THE LONG HAUL

La Trobe University has a key role in leadership training aimed to help discuss and resolve conflict between different religious and cultural communities in Australia.

Several academics, co-operating with community organisations and government agencies, are working to promote public policies, social practices, and media coverage that assist in bridging different cultural and religious traditions in Australia.

The program, still in its early stages, has seen the successful conclusion of a year-long pilot called The Dialogue Project – Promoting Inter-Religious and Inter-Cultural Dialogue in Victoria.

La Trobe was one of five sponsoring organisations. Its co-ordinator was Dr Michalis Michael, Research Fellow in Politics. Professor of Politics, Joseph Camilleri, provided intellectual leadership and co-authored with Dr Michael the report of the pilot project.

Two of the other sponsoring organisations, the Uniting Church and the Islamic Council of Victoria, are keen to retain their collaboration with Professor Camilleri and Dr Michael and to help them apply to various funding bodies for an expanded three-year project. This project aims to examine the implications of recent international conflicts involving Islam for the future of multiculturalism in Australia.

Based on past collaboration, the project will have two components. The first will first assess the adequacy of government, media and community responses to these conflicts, especially since September 11. On the basis of this assessment, the second component will design an educational program to promote culturally-sensitive and socially-constructive roles and policies.

A team of experts, consultants and community workers will develop leadership training modules aimed at key

sectors of society. The objective is to develop public policies, social practices and media coverage that facilitate dialogue and conflict resolution. The project is seen as enhancing the richness, diversity and creativity of Australia's multi-faith and multi-ethnic society.

Dr Michael said the pilot program was designed to foster a deeper dialogue in Muslim-Christian relations in Victoria in the context of the disturbing developments of the last few years including September 11, the Bali bombings, the 'war on terror' and the Iraq War.

The Reichstein Foundation, the Uniting Church of Australia (Victoria Synod) and La Trobe University funded the program run by a research education team led by Professor Camilleri and Dr Michael. The team included the Uniting Church of Australia, International Christian Peace Movement, Pax Christi, other academics from La Trobe, RMIT and Melbourne universities, the Islamic Council of Victoria and the Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria and East Timorese Student Association (Victoria University).

The pilot project conducted four one-day inter-active workshops, Initial Consultation on Christian and Muslim Dialogue (in July 2003); First (General) Islamic-Christian Dialogue Workshop (October 2003); Second (Middle Eastern) Christian-Muslim Dialogue Workshop (December 2003), the East Timorese-Indonesian Dialogue Workshop (March 2004) and three public forums in association with Readers' Feast Bookstore in Melbourne.

Dr Michael said the project deepened understanding of the dialogue process among the target groups and helped to raise community and media awareness of the opportunities for inter-cultural dialogue in Australia.

'One practical indication of this is a decision by East Timorese and Indonesian students studying in Melbourne's tertiary institutions to develop their relationship through organising joint social, cultural and sporting activities.' ■

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SMOOTH TALKING HELP

for adolescents who stutter

La Trobe University speech pathologists have developed a program they believe is helping adolescents who stutter – in more ways than one. Indications from the first 12 stuttering secondary school students undergoing a research trial of the ‘Smooth Speech Program’ at La Trobe’s Communications Clinic are that the program is succeeding.

‘All 12 who have undergone the first week-long intensive program can now speak without stuttering. Our challenge is to help them maintain this fluency,’ says program director, Dr Susan Block.

A specialist and world authority on stuttering treatment, Dr Block collaborated in developing the trial with Professor Mark Onslow and Dr Ann Packman of the Stuttering Research Centre at the University of Sydney.

‘Adolescents who stutter desperately need help from such a program. We know those who stutter in this age group are subjected to teasing and bullying and there is strong evidence that this can be so extreme that some avoid going to school and even contemplate suicide,’ says Dr Block.

Prior to the development of the program, group treatment for adolescents was intermittent in Victoria – and there was very little evidence for its success. The prototype program for adolescents, developed from a highly successful one for adults that Dr Block devised several years ago, started earlier this year.

The program is in two stages. The first stage, which the first 12 adolescents have completed, comprises a five-day intensive program in which they come to the clinic nine hours a day from Monday to Friday.

‘During this intensive phase they are literally taught to speak again,’ says Dr Block. ‘They participate in a variety of speaking situations like talking in front of a group, reading aloud, asking and answering questions, playing games, talking on the telephone, shopping – in fact all kinds of situations they find in the course of their normal life.’

‘The second stage comprises a two-hour session once a week for seven weeks in which we are attempting to cement the improvements made during the first intensive phase. The first cohort has completed the first intensive stage and is half way through the second phase.

‘We are feeling extremely optimistic that the adolescents will do as well as adults who have completed a similar program,’ Dr Block said.

‘This initiative has four main aims. We wish to provide adolescents with an opportunity for treatment they would not otherwise have, and then evaluate whether the results for them are as good as those for adults.

‘We also want to address the special needs of adolescents who stutter, like increasing their self esteem and help them manage their own treatment independent



Speech pathology student clinicians Erica Dixon, left, and Sima Hall work with ‘Jack’ in La Trobe’s Communication Clinic.

of their parents. The program also gives La Trobe speech pathology students a chance to learn skills in treating stuttering and to develop strategies for working with adolescents.’

Another two ‘Smooth Speech Programs’ for adolescents will be held at La Trobe in February and July, 2005. ■

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Reading skills pilot a success

The School of Human Communication Sciences has inaugurated a successful program designed to improve children’s reading skills. Introduced as a pilot scheme in March, it has so far assisted more than 30 children in grades 2 to 6 with reading and spelling difficulties.

The program’s goal is to increase children’s understanding of the speech sounds and sound rules that govern reading and writing in English. The Department of Human Services has contributed more than \$13,000 to the pilot phase.

The Manager of the La Trobe Communication Clinic, Ms Belinda Bain, says that the program – Called UQPAL (University of Queensland Phonological Awareness for Literacy) – was introduced to meet demand from parents.

It is conducted by speech pathologists and supervised by speech pathology students, and involves a mixture of group and individual tuition.

‘Many of the children who come to us have had a lot of remedial teaching, and don’t feel good about themselves. When they join a class with other kids in the same position, they quickly gain confidence and this helps their progress,’ Ms Bain said.

The program is held on Saturdays between 9 am and 1.30 pm at the La Trobe Communication Clinic on the University’s main Melbourne campus at Bundoora.

‘The pilot program has been a success so far, and we expect to continue it in 2005 and beyond,’ Ms Bain added. ■

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Silent achievement in Thailand



Thailand's Princess Sirindhorn, right, with La Trobe's Professor Branson and Don Miller, left.

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY made history in the provision of tertiary study for deaf people in Bangkok when more than 100 students – 80 of them deaf – graduated from a four-year Bachelor of Arts in Deaf Studies degree.

La Trobe had designed the degree in co-ordination with Mahidol University, one of Thailand's leading universities.

They were the first graduates from the course which La Trobe staff not only helped design, but also taught as part of a long association between the two universities.

Professor Janet Branson and Adjunct Associate Professor Don Miller of La Trobe's National Institute of Deaf Studies recently attended the Mahidol graduation and a special presentation at the Bangkok palace of Crown Princess Mahachakri Sirindhorn.

Mahidol's Ratchasuda College, where the course was presented, is the largest provider of courses for the disabled in South-east Asia and the college is supported strongly by Princess Sirindhorn.

The students chose majors including linguistics, management or interpreting. Most, said Professor Branson, found work immediately. For example, the Thai Ministry of Special Education employed

the teachers and the management graduates went to special schools for the deaf.

At the graduation ceremony, where 4,000 students received their degrees, La Trobe received praise for its contribution to the new degree in Deaf Studies.

'This course,' Professor Branson said, 'is unique in that it is taught entirely in Thai Sign, the official sign language in Thailand. Thai Sign bears no resemblance to spoken Thai, and all La Trobe teachers involved had to become proficient in it.'

Other La Trobe staff involved included Ms Berna Hutchins, Ms Jennie Bernal, Ms Veronica Pardo and Mr Paul Charvet-Jackson.

While in Thailand, Professor Branson also ran a conference for principals of schools for the deaf and representatives of the Ministry of Special Education.

The conference discussed ways to revamp Thailand's entire education program for deaf students. Professor Branson said the new teaching system would be Steiner-based, with a focus on 'experiencing'. It will also re-introduce learning techniques employed by Buddhist monks who ran Thailand's first schools. The new system will employ both hearing and deaf teachers. ■

Mildura campus hosts global agroecology conference

The latest developments in agroecology – and how they can be used to improve productivity and sustainability of agriculture – were examined at an international conference on La Trobe University's Mildura campus in September.

The conference featured 27 speakers from the USA, New Zealand, France, Italy and Australia. Scientists and producers exchanged ideas on optimal use and enhancement of water and soil nutrients, integrated pest management, ecological engineering, ecosystem services, social ecology, Australian native products and organic farming from both biological and economic perspectives.

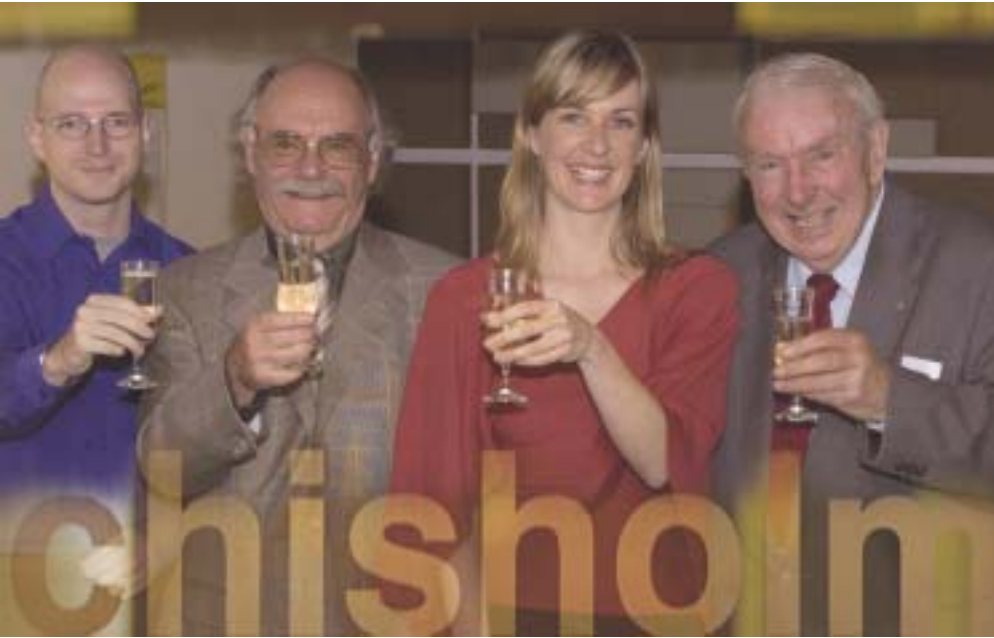
With Australia facing major challenges as a food producer for an expanding world population, conference convenor, Dr Aldo Poiani, said agroecologists were developing new approaches to productivity. Environmentally and economically sustainable, these approaches could help Australian farmers meet these challenges.

The conference was part of the Barkindji Biosphere initiative, a partnership between UNESCO, La Trobe University, Trust for Nature, Australian Inland Botanic Gardens and the Mildura community. ■

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Dr Poiani: new approaches to productivity.



COLLEGE LIFE

GREAT FOR FILLING BOOTS AND GROWING BRAINS!

'We ran rampant through the halls and along the walkways of this college – in boots too big for our feet, our heads bursting with ideas too big for our brains.'

With that reflection on her time at La Trobe's Chisholm College during the early nineties, well-known comedian and media personality, Corinne Grant, last month returned to the University to officially open the College's new Common Room.

Chisholm Head, Mr Terry Collits, said the evening celebrated the completion of a ten-year, \$5 million renovation program. Apart from Ms Grant, it brought back more than 40 alumni, including the first College Head, La Trobe Foundation Professor of Chemistry, Jim Morrison.

Ms Grant said she was initially a nursing student on the Albury-Wodonga campus. While good at theory, she decided her practical skills meant she would probably save more lives by dropping out of nursing than sticking to it. So she transferred to an Arts degree, majoring in drama on the La Trobe main Melbourne campus at Bundoora.

Addressing 150 college residents and visitors, Ms Grant highlighted two of the main advantages of university college life: for a young student from the country it eased the transition to city social life and supplied an energetic community of wide interests.

'Student theatre grew to be a big part of my life and there were many other student theatre members living in Chisholm. We became a sort of half-way house for various writers, actors, musicians directors and sundry other shifty types. It was a wonderful and exciting time.

'Chisholm College was a real home to me, and I was part of a real community. Chisholm taught me resilience and resourcefulness. Nothing was handed to you on a platter. You had to get involved and make things happen yourself.

'It is the best life-skill I have ever learnt, and I'm sure it is the main reason that I am able to make my living as a performer now. I will always be proud and thankful to say I lived here.' ■

Photo top of page: Corinne Grant, Professor Morrison, right, Mr Collits and College PhD student, Carlo Wouters, left, share a toast at the opening ceremony.

New at Glenn and Menzies

LA TROBE'S MENZIES COLLEGE is also renovating – upgrading its student leadership facilities and building a new training and resource centre, sponsored by Challenge Commercial Interiors.

Earlier this year the Head of College, Dr Michael Shortland, launched a new training program for college student leaders in collaboration with Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE. He said this was the only nationally-recognised Certificate IV program in student leadership in Australia. The program is for college seniors in areas such as effective communication, team-building, problem solving, assertiveness and counselling.

Ten Menzies' residents this year traveled to Cambodia, where they worked in a college-sponsored orphanage, helped to establish a craft shop and taught English in local schools.

GLENN COLLEGE – La Trobe's oldest residential college and first building on campus – recently refurbished its dining hall, restaurant, court yard and residential areas. With extensive mentoring and student leadership programs, Glenn residents achieve an exceptionally high academic success rate, said College Head, Dr Johann Le Roux.

The college also helped set up, and continues to provide a home for, the 'La Trobe Life Skills Program'. This ground-breaking training program offers day-programs for young people with disabilities and special needs, boosting their educational and social development. Glenn College also helps 'Children of Phoenix', a support group for disadvantaged and at-risk children in Australia.

- All colleges have strong outreach programs, locally and overseas. Apart from Glenn's assistance to Children of Phoenix, and Menzies' orphanage in Cambodia, Chisholm supports a centre for street kids in India.

Between them, the three colleges accommodate about 1,100 students, with some 40 per cent from overseas. More than 40 different nationalities are represented. ■



Students go a-countin' in the annual FROG CENSUS

Students from four north suburban schools recently took part in the annual Frog Census held in La Trobe University's Gresswell Forest. The survey is co-ordinated annually by Melbourne Water because the overall level of frog activity serves as an ecological indicator of the health of our waterways.

About 150 Year 5 to 8 students from the Gresswell Cluster of schools – Macleod College and Kingsbury, Rosanna, and Rosanna Golf Links primary schools – took part.

They listened for frog calls, recorded them and sent the tapes to Melbourne Water. Each species of frog has its own distinct call by which it can be identified. And there were strict instructions for aspirational students: kissing frogs was not allowed!

The Gresswell Cluster schools work in partnership with La Trobe University and Banyule City Council on educational and restoration projects on the Gresswell Forest Nature Conservation Reserve.

Critical to preserving rare native woodlands in Melbourne's north, the State-significant Gresswell Forest is managed by La Trobe University as part of the University's Wildlife Reserves.

La Trobe University, through its Wildlife Reserves Department – which includes the Melbourne Wildlife Sanctuary – also assists with many ecological science topics on the Gresswell Cluster schools' website. The website houses more than 130 on-line resources for students and teachers. ■

www.gresswell.vic.edu.au

NEW GAY AND LESBIAN HEALTH UNIT OPENED

A major development in health innovation – a gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex health and well-being resource unit – was officially opened in September by Victoria's Minister for Health, Ms Bronwyn Pike.

The Unit is located at La Trobe University's Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS), at its city campus in Melbourne.

The \$1 million unit, established under Victoria's Gay and Lesbian Health Action Plan, is managed by a consortium consisting of ARCSHS, Women's Health Victoria and the Victorian AIDS Council and Gay Men's Health Centre.

Unit Director, Ms Anne Mitchell, formerly manager of community education and liaison at ARCSHS, said the unit will train health care providers and health organisations about service delivery, develop health resources in conjunction with mainstream services, establish a research and information clearinghouse for health-care providers, and advise government.

Other staff members include Mr Nikos Thomacos and Mr Sunil Patel. ■



Employability Challenge

La Trobe University won every prize in this year's inter-university Employability Skills Challenge, a competition between students from four Victorian universities – La Trobe, Victoria, Deakin and Swinburne.

Each university entered ten teams of students. They had an hour to deal with a hypothetical disaster and its aftermath – an aircraft crash in suburban Melbourne and subsequent re-development of the crash site. The scenario was designed and judged by the State Emergency Service, one of the sponsors.

La Trobe entered six teams from Menzies College, four from Glenn College and took

out all four prize categories: overall winner, as well as the best environmental, technical and socially responsible solutions.

Apart from the SES, other sponsors were the Australian Institute of Management (AIM), National Power Services, the Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists and Managers, and the City of Melbourne.

La Trobe's Course and Careers Service helped organise the competition. Careers adviser, Patricia Brown, said the 'challenge' helps students hone their skills in problem solving, team work, time management, leadership and creative thinking.

Scott Weekley, a third year bachelor of business student at Menzies College, led the overall winning team. He said living and studying in a college community helped the team's success.

Each team had a mentor, drawn from the AIM. Head of Menzies College, Dr Michael Shortland, compered the event, which was held at Victoria University. ■



Political playing field uneven for small parties

The problem of revenue raising

Australia is one of the great Western democracies – but its political playing field is uneven for smaller parties. This is because their ability to raise funds for party political purposes is very much less than the larger parties.

This is the opinion of Mr Joo-Cheong Tham, an associate lecturer in law at La Trobe University and a specialist in the sourcing of funding for Australian political parties. He has specialised in the area for five years, working with La Trobe Law undergraduate Mr David Grove in recent research.

With the recent federal election in the news, Mr Tham said that the two principal forms of party funding were unfair to the smaller parties, particularly those with no or few members in parliament.

He explained that there were a number of sources of funding for political parties. They included ‘parliamentary entitlements’ based on the number of members in parliament, membership subscriptions, corporate donations, individual donations, and party fundraising activities.

He said Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) figures, based on total party funding for the three financial years 1999/2000 to 2001/2002, reveal a dramatic funding inequality between the ALP, Liberal Party and National Party, on one hand, and the Democrats and the Greens, on the other.

The ALP and the two Coalition parties received more than \$20 per 2001 election vote, Mr Tham said, while the Democrats and Greens received around \$10 per 2001 election vote.

‘For each dollar per vote the Democrats received, the ALP received nearly three dollars. And for each dollar per vote received by the Greens, the Liberal Party received nearly two dollars.’

In the 1999/2000 financial year the AEC’s Audit Office figures reveal that parliamentary entitlements to all parties

amounted to \$354 million dollars. To get a sense of proportion, the parties’ budgets from all other sources (for the three financial years 1999/2000-2001/2002) was less than this amount, and stood at approximately \$248 million.

Mr Tham said minor parties were also disadvantaged when it came to corporate donations.

He said the ALP and coalition parties acknowledged that outside of money received from parliamentary entitlements, corporate donations were their main source of income. All three parties listed individual donations as their second source of income and the ALP listed trade unions as its third largest source. ■



Forging new links

PASSAGE to INDIA

La Trobe University’s Thesis Eleven Centre for Critical Theory has organised ten days of events in New Delhi, India, from 4 to 15 December.

The events include public lectures, seminars, a specialist two-day colloquium, field trips, bilateral university meetings and a reception at the Australian High Commission. Deputy Director of the Thesis Eleven Centre, Dr Trevor Hogan, said about 20 staff and postgraduate

students from La Trobe will take part. Some of the delegates are shown above with Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences, Professor Roger Wales, right.

The event, titled ‘Australia and India: Cities, Nation-States, Alternative Modernities, Civilisations?’ aims to develop a comparative perspective on social and political theory of India and Australia. It will also promote Australian Studies in Delhi – and South Asian Studies in Melbourne. There are plans to secure agreements between La Trobe and universities in Delhi to enhance teaching exchange, visiting scholar schemes, and research collaboration.

Host organisations include Hindu College, Delhi University; Oxford University Press of India; Sage Publications India; the Australian High Commission, and Jawaharlal Nehru University. Sponsors are the Australia-India Council, La Trobe University and various Indian institutions. ■

FREE TRADE, WAR IN IRAQ ... AND 'CHICK LIT'

Burgeoning interest in Australian Studies

Australian Studies is coming out from the shadow of the bush hat and Ned Kelly's helmet.

The emphasis today is on Australia's place in the world and the region. For better or worse, our identity in the 21st century is being forged in the context of Iraq, Timor, Solomon Islands and the US Free Trade Agreement.

And this shifting emphasis is reflecting strongly in what students are choosing for their research at La Trobe University, where Australian Studies is a rapidly growing field.

In September the public was invited to sample some of this research, showcased at 'Australian Perspectives: An Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Conference' held on La Trobe University's main Melbourne Campus at Bundoora. The conference was attended by about 100 students, 50 of them from interstate and two from New Zealand.

Dr Corinne Manning, Project Officer for Australian Studies, says the field encourages students to explore aspects of the Australian experience within the framework of a global society.

'An intellectually stimulating, evolving and growing research area, Australian Studies is increasingly recognised as one of La Trobe University's strengths in research and teaching,' she says.

For example, highlighting the University's leadership, La Trobe has provided three of the last five Visiting Professors in Australian Studies at Harvard University in the US. They are Professor of Social Theory, Peter Beilharz, who heads Australian Studies at La Trobe; Professor of History, Marilyn Lake; and Professor of Politics, Dennis Altman, who takes up his Harvard post shortly.

Dr Manning says the interdisciplinary nature of the program allows students to



Professor Beilharz, right, and Dr Manning with conference organiser, La Trobe PhD student in Cinema Studies, Ms Nathalie Brillon, left, and Melbourne University's Katrina Stats, rear.

apply different methods and theories to issues such as popular culture, race, class, gender, politics, heritage, environment, and visual and literary arts.

Postgraduates work with academics from archaeology, anthropology, art history, cinema studies, English, history, linguistics, media studies, politics, sociology, and theatre and drama.

At the conference, 18 papers were presented in six categories: Australia and the Asia-Pacific; Living on the Margins; Australia and Beyond; Narratives of Nation; Evolving Feminisms; and Land and Identity.

Among the La Trobe contributions, a presentation titled *The Australian New Left and the Vietnam War: Lessons for Iraq?* examined the role of New Left activists in the anti-war movement, the success of this opposition, and the current situation in Iraq.

Another, *Arguing Cultural Rights*, dealt with the US Free Trade Agreement. It explored the undeveloped nature of

cultural rights and how these might be 'understood in an Australian context where the notion of an Australian culture is itself a highly problematic concept'.

A third, *Representations of the European Union in the Australian Media*, noted that the European Union – 'our largest merchandise trading partner, our largest partner for trade in services, our principal source of import goods, and our leading investor' – remains 'virtually invisible in local media, and is perceived as incomprehensible and esoteric by the Australian public'.

Other subjects ranged from poetry, the visual arts, and extremist graffiti in Australian prisons to Queer death, White Pentecostal Australian women, and local 'Chick Lit'.

The conference was opened by La Trobe Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences, Professor Roger Wales, and wrapped-up by Professor of Politics, Robert Manne. ■

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