

Bulletin



LA TROBE UNIVERSITY: the International Dimension

SCIENCE AT THE HEART OF GOVERNMENT



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Enquiries and submissions to the editor, Ernest Raetz, La Trobe University, Victoria, 3086 Australia
Tel: (03) 9479 2315, Fax (03) 9479 1387
Email: bulletin@latrobe.edu.au

Articles: Noel Carrick, Ernest Raetz
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A 'people's university' to improve Third World health



DR DAVID LEGGE, Associate Professor in Public Health, has played a prominent role in setting up a 'virtual' university to improve health in the Third World.

A specialist in the politics and economics of Third World primary health care, Dr Legge is academic convenor of the newly established International People's Health University (IPHU).

IPHU was launched, and conducted its first course, at the Second Assembly of the People's Health Movement at the University of Cuenca, Ecuador, in July this year.

Dr Legge says the People's Health Movement is a world-wide coalition of 'grass roots' health initiatives and socially progressive groups committed to working for the health and rights of disadvantaged people and, ultimately, for all people.



Dr Legge: 'grass roots' health initiatives.

IPHU is a virtual university, with no campus or staff of its own. However, Dr Legge expects it to become a 'real force' in developing and teaching health-associated courses and in packaging courses for established universities.

Dr Legge says the first People's Health Assembly was in Bangladesh in 2000 where the concept of an international health university was raised. PHM works on local and global issues and in dialogue with the World Health Organisation.

One of IPHU's prime aims is to develop, resource and conduct short courses for health activists from Third World countries. These include accredited courses and educational material for use by local institutions.

'Our long term aim is to build up a co-operative research and teaching network in relation to health policies and practices in Third World countries.'

Dr Legge taught two units in the first course, Primary Health Care and the Political Economy of Health, held in conjunction with the Cuenca Assembly. The units dealt with macro-economics and health and global institutions shaping health policy.

He will teach other IPHU courses, planned for Bangladesh, South Africa, Egypt and Greece during the next 18 months. ●

La Trobe and Flinders are the only two Australian universities associated with IPHU, but another 12 universities in Europe, North America and Asia are involved.

La Trobe ranked in top 100 universities of the world

By Michael Osborne, Vice-Chancellor

The widely respected *Times Higher Education Supplement* has ranked La Trobe University at 98 in its latest review of the top 200 universities of the world.

This represents a very significant rise from an already excellent rating of 142 in the 2004 exercise.

To figure so highly in such an independent evaluation is a remarkable achievement and, quite apart from the recognition of the quality of the academic staff, it demonstrates the importance of the international activity of the University and the value of such internationally recognised research centres as the Institute for Advanced Study (which includes the prestigious Centre for Linguistic Typology and will soon house also the Peking University-La Trobe University-Beijing Foreign Studies University Centre for China Studies).

The criteria utilised for the ranking included scores for peer review (40%), for numbers of international students (5%), for student/staff ratios (20%) and for citations (20%), and on the criterion of peer review alone La Trobe would have risen to seventy-third position, whilst on that of citations, it would have been placed equal eighty-first. The magnitude of the achievement is perhaps best appreciated by considering some of the older and more famous universities currently rated below La Trobe – for examples, Göttingen (114), Leiden (138), Birmingham (143), Nanjing (150), Bologna (159), Shanghai Jiao Tong (169) and Uppsala (180). Of course, the world of higher education is a volatile one and rankings can change quite sharply from year to year – so, whilst taking justifiable pride in its present position, La Trobe University will need to remain very active in research and internationally to maintain and, if possible, to enhance its position in the top 100.



Launch of the Joint Centre for China Studies at a recent ceremony in Beijing, front row from right: Professor Osborne, Professor Hao Ping, President of Beijing Foreign Studies University, Professor Xu Zhihong, President of Peking University, with La Trobe's Professor Pei Likun, Director of the new Centre, far right, see further details page 5.

Amongst the giants in Arts and Humanities

For the first time the *Times Higher Education Supplement* has also published a top 100 ranking for a number of discipline areas – namely Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences, Biomedicine, Science and Technology.

In Arts and Humanities La Trobe University, with a strong publication record and with a host of members of the learned Academies, has long been perceived as having a strong reputation worldwide. This perception is now strikingly endorsed with the University securing the rank of 23 in the *Times Higher Education Supplement* report (equal with Monash University). This is a quite brilliant achievement, which sets La Trobe amongst the world leaders, and which brings deserved recognition to the scholars in the various fields of study. Again, of course, the possible volatility of rankings from year to year needs to be acknowledged, but to be rated above such

world famous institutions as Heidelberg, Johns Hopkins, Bologna, Boston, Manchester, and the National University of Singapore is an extraordinarily compelling testimony to academic strength.

In the Top 100 in Social Sciences and Biomedicine

La Trobe was also ranked in the top 100 world wide in two further disciplinary groups. In Social Sciences the University achieved a world ranking of 68 and it was ninth in Australia. This review also included a citation index, which is a highly significant indicator of research quality, and on this criterion alone La Trobe University would have been placed in forty-third position globally and in fourth position in Australia, after Sydney, the University of New South Wales and the Australian National University.

In the area of Biomedicine, La Trobe also achieved a place in the

top 100, being ranked at 86. This is eloquent testimony to the strength of the Biosciences in the University and it certainly provides strong underpinning for La Trobe in its quest for a Medical School.

All in all, this is an extremely impressive performance of which everyone in the University should be proud. In short it means that La Trobe is acknowledged as a leading university on the world stage.

Some general observations on the rankings

Two general observations of a topical nature are pertinent.

Firstly, with regard to research assessment, the presence of seventeen Australian universities in the world's top 200 should sound a cautionary note to those who seek simplistically to limit severely the number of research-based universities in Australia. The data for the top 200 universities clearly relate substantially to demonstrable research reputation, as is obvious from attributing 60% of the assessment to peer review and citations, and this should surely be sufficient to certify the research credentials of those included. Additionally, such an ostentatious endorsement of the strength of the Australian university sector should (but doubtless will not) serve as a stimulus to governments to invest more strongly in the infrastructure that will be necessary to continue to compete with the major universities of the world.

Secondly a striking, and disturbing, feature of the *Times Higher Education Supplement* data is that, by and large,

Australian universities fare badly in the area of student/staff ratios, which are weighted at 20%. The highest score is that of ANU at 13 and this score is probably inflated by the presence of a large research-only contingent at that institution. La Trobe University has a score of 6; and of the other fifteen Australian universities in the top 200 seven have scores of 6 or less and only three have more than 8 (Melbourne, UWA and UNSW). By contrast it is noteworthy that only two (non-Australian) universities which are ranked above La Trobe University have an inferior score for student/staff ratio (Vienna and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem) and almost all of those which are ranked below La Trobe University have better scores. Interestingly too, all of the Chinese universities listed have higher scores in this category – Beijing (Peking) 26, Fudan (17), China University of Science and Technology (27), and high flyers elsewhere have extremely impressive scores – for example, Oxford 23, Yale 42 and Duke University 66.

The relatively poor scores for Australian universities is a reflection of the current funding situation and it should (but probably will not) serve as a reminder to governments that Australian institutions are being precluded from still higher international rankings by a lack of appropriate public investment.

International activities

Australia is widely acknowledged as a leading player in the internationalisation of higher education and the mission of La Trobe University specifically draws attention to its aspiration to be a protagonist in this

sphere. The success of the University in this arena is certainly a strong contributing factor to its recognition as one of the leading universities of the world.

In practice internationalisation encompasses many facets, including the export of higher education services, the development of co-operative links with overseas universities, the establishment of international centres, the engagement in joint research projects with overseas partners, the provision of opportunities for local students to study overseas, and attendance at significant ceremonies, academic conferences and meetings in universities in other countries.

Recruiting students

The recruitment of international students on and offshore is necessarily an important feature of internationalisation, since government policies have caused universities to develop a dependence upon the revenue that derives from such operations. Such recruitment has become increasingly demanding, as more and more universities from more and more countries compete, including countries which are targets of recruitment for Australian universities (such as Malaysia, Hong Kong, Singapore and China). None the less, the University has done well in moving from a very modest base generating a mere \$5 million or so in 1997 to the present situation where the income from this sector amounts to more than \$40 million, and is expected to increase steadily in the future.

As numbers have increased so has the desirability of staging graduations in the target countries, and these ceremonies provide a good opportunity to showcase the University, to further links with alumni and to attract new students.

Graduation at Harbin Medical University.



This year La Trobe has conducted major graduations in Bhutan, Harbin (PRC), Hong Kong, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi – and it is scheduled soon to conduct the first such ceremony for Bachelor of Business students in Montpellier (France).



Recent graduation ceremony in Hanoi.

La Trobe Link with China

La Trobe University has nearly 300 links with universities overseas and has for some years sought to build strong links with China. Naturally such developments take time and patience (and resources), but the University now has numerous successful programs running in various areas of Health Administration, Business, Information Technology and Linguistics at the Masters level and, very importantly, has managed to establish a Joint Centre for China Studies in partnership with Peking University and the Beijing Foreign Studies University to be located in the Institute for Advanced Study at the Melbourne (Bundoora) Campus.

This is the first such Centre in Australia and, given the status of Peking University as the premier institution in China (and currently rated fifteenth in the world), it has put the University in a very strong position for being a leader in operations in China. In practical terms, the strong linkage with these two Chinese universities has already produced significant outcomes in terms of a joint project to publish the Archives of the Qing Dynasty from the Forbidden City in Beijing. Some six volumes are envisaged covering relations with Britain initially, the first to be launched in March 2006 at the Bundoora Campus.

The China Centre will be the focus for the development of future research links, the recruitment of students, the exchange of staff and students, the mounting of

customised training programs (in China) and the maintenance of a community facility (locally). The launch of the Centre at Peking University (see photo, page 3) attracted considerable media attention all over China and much favourable publicity for the University.

Providing opportunities for students

The provision of opportunities for students to undertake some of their studies in an overseas institution is a particularly important aspiration of the University and to this end it has pioneered the International Network of Universities (INU). This is a consortium of thirteen universities from eight countries established with the principal aim of facilitating student mobility by allowing students to undertake for credit some studies in a partner university overseas. The presidency of this consortium is currently held by La Trobe University. The membership comprises La Trobe and Flinders (Australia), Leicester (UK) James Madison, Harrisonburg (USA), Jönköping and Malmö (Sweden), Budapest University of Technology and Engineering (Hungary), Hiroshima and Ritsumeikan (Japan), Harbin Medical University, Beijing Capital University and Sichuan Parahyangan (Indonesia). Currently some 60 students are taking advantage of this scheme, and 27 students from La Trobe are studying overseas in partner universities. ●



Professor Osborne with La Trobe University International Network of Universities (INU) Health Sciences students at Jönköping University in Sweden.

Alumni health conference in Beijing

A conference attended by 45 alumni of La Trobe University's Master of Health Administration program was held in Beijing on 17 and 18 September.

A number of La Trobe academic staff associated with the Program, including the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Michael Osborne, the Director of La Trobe's China Health Program, Dr David Legge, and the Director of the La Trobe Peking University China Studies Centre, Dr Likun Pei, spoke at the conference.

By the end of this year there will be around 270 graduates of the program which began in 1997. A total of 150 have completed the course at Harbin University in China and 120 have come to the Melbourne (Bundoora) campus for the course which is taught in Mandarin.

The recent conference was for alumni who had completed the course in Melbourne, many of whom now fill senior health administration posts in China.

'Many of our alumni have received promotion because of the increase in skills received through our Master of Health Administration program,' Dr Legge said.

The conference examined a number of ways of approaching Chinese health care problems. It also produced the first volume of a book, *Health Development: Opportunities and Challenges for China Student Publications and Reports*, comprised of papers contributed by the alumni.

Dr Hui Yang of the La Trobe China Health Program organised the conference in conjunction with other La Trobe and Peking University colleagues. ●



High Commissioner Shukla, second from left, with Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences, Professor Roger Wales, Professor Jeffrey and Professor Stoddart.

LIISA: new focus on India and South Asia

LA TROBE University's new Institute for India and South Asia (LIISA) was launched late in October by the High Commissioner for India, Mr P. P. Shukla.

Highlighting the significance of growing economic ties between Australia and India, Mr Shukla stressed that co-operation in intellectual endeavour was also very important.

'La Trobe University has done some great pioneering work in this field, and it is a pleasure to join you in your efforts to try and help achieve what we have set as a common goal.'

Mr Shukla said since the end of the cold war, India has been looking further eastward, without diluting its relations with Europe and the USA. As a result, relations with Australia had developed more 'texture and depth' and, in that context, the La Trobe Institute was a 'wonderful and welcome initiative'.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research, Professor Brian Stoddart, said the Institute brings together long-standing efforts in studies of India and its neighbours. It will also initiate and support new programs to deepen La Trobe University's connections with the region. To help achieve this, an 18 member La Trobe delegation visited India late last year.

La Trobe University has researched and taught about India and South Asia since the late 1960s with regular academic exchanges. Its library today holds one of Australia's finest collections dealing with the region.

Professor of Politics, Robin Jeffrey, who helped develop the field at La Trobe, and who serves as Interim Director of the new Institute, said one of the earliest distinguished visitors to the University was former Indian Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi in 1968.

'Since then, hundreds of students have studied in these areas and La Trobe researchers have written scores of books and papers about India and South Asia.'

He said fields of studies range widely, from India's media industries and Hindi language-teaching, to research into the classical Sanskrit *Ganesh Purana*, a text containing myths about the popular elephant-headed god, Ganesh, that have never been translated into a European language.

Other LIISA activities include a University exchange agreement with Lady Shri Ram College, New Delhi (named the best college in India in 2005 by *India Today* magazine), the Martell-DK essay Prize, and a project digitising for the world-wide-web rare 19th century Indian reports and documents influential in the formation of nation, state and culture during the colonial period.

As part of the inauguration, University of Chicago's Professor Dipesh Chakrabarty spoke on *The Legacies of Bandung: Decolonisation and the Politics of Culture*.

THE LARGEST INDIAN feature film shot in Australia, *Salaam Namaste*, starring Preity Zinta and Saif Ali Khan, was partly filmed on location at La Trobe University's main Melbourne campus at Bundoora earlier this year.

One of India's top box office successes, the film is helping promote the State of Victoria, and La Trobe University, to an estimated Indian audience of 300 million. ●

See also: *La Trobe role in global Sanskrit program*, page 9.

Top ANU post for Robin Jeffrey

Professor Robin Jeffrey has been appointed to the most influential academic post in his field in Australia: Director of the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies and first Convenor of the College of Asian and Pacific Studies at the Australian National University in Canberra. He takes up his new post next year, but will maintain a link with LIISA. ●



Former Prime Minister, Mrs Gandhi, visits La Trobe University in 1968.



Booker-Prize winning author, Arundhati Roy, at the University in 1999.

'JELLY BELLY', 'CAESAR POT' AND SCARS



Unrecognised consequences of **CAESAREAN SECTION**

Caesarean surgery may take less than twenty minutes – but women live the rest of their lives with the changes it brings. Some reported numb, painful or itchy scars up to seven years after surgery.

A LA TROBE UNIVERSITY researcher is investigating women's experiences of recovery, and their longer term health, after surgical childbirth. Starting in 2002, the research was conducted against a background of steadily increasing caesareans.

In Australia that year, 27 per cent of the 250,758 women giving birth had a caesarean section. The rate is similar in Victoria, having increased from 16 per cent in 1986.

'There is no doubt that caesarean sections can be life saving, but they are now so common it is clear that many are not being conducted to save lives,' says Ms Michelle Kealy whose research for her doctoral thesis is supervised by Dr Rhonda Small and Adjunct Associate Professor Jeanne Daly, both of La Trobe's Mother & Child Health Research.

'This means that women and their caregivers need to weigh up carefully the risks and benefits of performing caesarean section,' Ms Kealy said.

'Given such an increase in their use, surprisingly little is known about women's experiences of recovery and their longer

term health after surgical childbirth.'

Ms Kealy interviewed 32 women who had all given birth by caesarean section in Victoria. There were 65 births in the group, including 49 caesarean sections. They were selected from participants in a larger study of women's health after operative birth, including caesarean, forceps and vacuum deliveries.

She identified women who had experienced a caesarean section in the last 12 months, women who had caesarean section before and after labour commenced, as well as women who had more than one caesarean birth. Twelve women experienced vaginal birth as well as caesarean section, so they were able to compare their birth experiences.

Ms Kealy presented findings from her study to the British Sociology Association Medical Sociology Group Annual Conference at York, UK, after receiving the Association's International Student Bursary.

'Lots of previously unreported negative consequences of caesarean section emerged from my interviews,' Ms Kealy said. 'One was that almost all the women

were concerned by changes to their body shape, gaining weight or scar problems.'

All but one of the 32 women interviewed talked about body issues. Eighteen expressed negative feelings about their body shape or abdominal muscle tone ('jelly belly'), 17 talked about their caesar scar being numb, painful or itchy, even up to seven years after surgery, and 12 mentioned unwanted weight gain ('caesar pot').

'In a society increasingly concerned with women appearing svelte-like, a scarred and overhanging abdomen may even drive women to consider reconstructive surgery to help repair their damaged bodies,' Ms Kealy said.

'I hope that the findings of this research, based on mothers' own experiences of recovery after caesarean delivery, provide women and their caregivers with more information.

'I also hope the research may contribute to increased caution about caesarean section, especially when considered for non-medical reasons.

Continued on page 10

Placebo brain surgery

It's not ethical - and of little value

DURING HUMAN TRIALS to evaluate new pharmaceutical therapies it is common for participants in the control group to be given a placebo or sham drug.

This enables the effect of the drug on those who have taken it to be compared with those who believe they have taken it but have not.

Should the same technique be used with brain surgical trials?

For example, is it appropriate to perform sham or placebo operations to evaluate the safety and efficacy of neural tissue grafting, a surgical technique used to treat Parkinson's disease?

A La Trobe University researcher and a colleague in social health from the University of Melbourne are examining this extremely controversial question which takes in both medical ethics and questions about the efficacy of assessment methods used in trials of novel surgical procedures.

Mr Stephen Polgar, a La Trobe senior lecturer in Public Health, and Ms Joanna Ng, a postgraduate student at the University of Melbourne, have closely examined the outcomes of four surgical trials in the USA, three of which involve transplanting cells for patients with Parkinson's disease.

A paper by Mr Polgar and Ms Ng, *Ethics, Methodology and the use of Placebo Controls* in surgical trial appeared in the October 2005 edition of the international journal, *Brain Research Bulletin*.

This is part of a series of publications analysing the methodological and

theoretical foundations for using stem cells to reconstruct the human brain.

'After closely assessing the rationale and methods, we concluded on the basis of the evidence that sham surgery was not essential and therefore not ethical,' Mr Polgar said.

Mr Polgar explains that neural tissue grafting is an experimental procedure used to treat a number of neuro-degenerative disorders including Parkinson's disease. Donor embryonic cell tissue from human embryos is used to reinnervate the brain.

The next phase of the research for reconstructing the human brain will involve trialling the grafting of various stem cell lines which may prove more clinically effective than embryonic cells.

Mr Polgar's research specialises in the mechanisms and outcomes of reconstructive neurosurgery and the importance of rehabilitation for recovery following neural grafting. Ms Ng has an academic interest in chronic illnesses, ethics and complementary medicine.

Mr Polgar said that American neurosurgeons performed 94 neural grafting procedures, with 40 of these being sham operations. Sham operations involve the same interventions as actual surgery with exception of delivering the 'active' component of the treatment.

Those who received the sham operations were meant to be the control group against which the efficacy of the genuine operations could be gauged. In order to maintain a double-blind design, the surgeons go through the 'street theatre' of pretending to the sedated

patients that they are conducting a genuine transplantation.

Each patient was aware when volunteering to participate in the studies that sham operations were involved in the trials, but were not aware whether their own operation was genuine or sham.

Mr Polgar and Ms Ng are concerned that the use of sham surgery, which is an active intervention with obvious risks, is significantly different to the inert placebos used in pharmacological research.

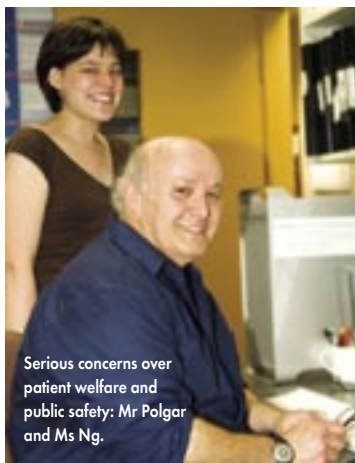
'Those who carried out the trials were perfectly competent surgeons who believe putting people through sham surgery contributes to knowledge about outcomes,' Mr Polgar said.

He concedes that sham surgery enables the classic methodologically-rigorous evaluation method known as a double-blind randomised trial to be used because it is the most effective way to control for confounding variables such as the placebo effect and investigator bias.

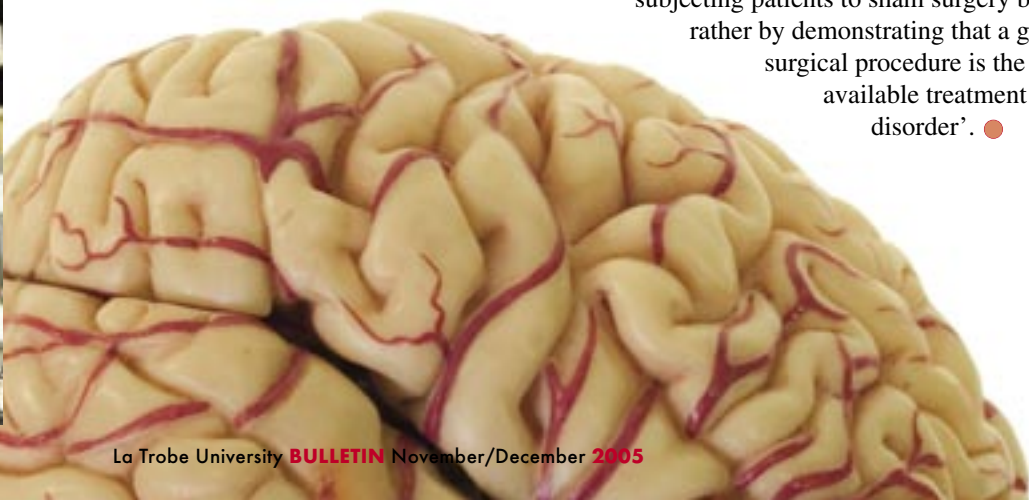
Regardless of the large placebo effects anticipated by the neurosurgeons, a key finding in the paper was that there was no evidence for placebo effects in the sham-operated patients.

Also, Mr Polgar and Ms Ng found that the poor efficacy of the surgical procedures was evident without reference to the placebo controls. They concluded that the inclusion of sham operated control groups does not improve the validity of either statistical or clinical decision making - and was therefore neither essential nor ethical.

'We contend that the welfare of patients and public safety are not protected by subjecting patients to sham surgery but rather by demonstrating that a given surgical procedure is the best available treatment for a disorder'. ●



Serious concerns over patient welfare and public safety: Mr Polgar and Ms Ng.



La Trobe role in global Sanskrit program

TWO LA TROBE UNIVERSITY indologists – specialists in Sanskrit texts – are taking part in the largest organised Sanskrit-English translation program ever attempted.

Dr Gregory Bailey and Dr Adam Bowles are the only Australians among 40 of the world's top English-speaking Sanskrit scholars from nine countries engaged by the American-based Clay Sanskrit Library to produce 100 volumes of classical Sanskrit literature over the next five years.

Dr Bailey is a Reader in La Trobe's Asian Studies Program and Dr Bowles is an honorary research associate in Asian Studies who recently completed his PhD under Dr Bailey's supervision.

Dr Bowles is working full time and Dr Bailey part time on the project initiated by the American philanthropist and Sanskrit scholar, John Clay, to increase the number of Sanskrit classics available in English alongside the original Sanskrit texts written in Roman script.

John Clay and his wife Jennifer founded the JCC Foundation which in turn created the Clay Sanskrit Library, engaging Richard Gombrich, Professor Emeritus of Sanskrit at Oxford University, as general editor.

The library was created to introduce classic Sanskrit literature to a wide international readership and for use in teaching Sanskrit.

Dr Bailey explained that Sanskrit, one

There are something like three million Sanskrit texts, most of which have never been translated into another language.

of the great classical languages of India, has a huge volume of literature created from somewhere between 1500 and 1200 BC until the present day.

An Indo-Aryan language, it has a similar position in India today to that of Latin and Greek in Medieval Europe and is widely used in Hindu religious rituals.

'There are something like three million Sanskrit texts, most of which have never been translated into another language. In fact, there are more classical Sanskrit texts than texts in classical Greek and Latin combined,' Dr Bailey said.

'Sanskrit is now mainly a written language although there would be several million people in India with various degrees of knowledge of the language. It is hard to be specific but I would think there would be around 1,000 people in Australia who have some knowledge of Sanskrit.'

Several years ago, Professor Gombrich approached Dr Bailey to participate by translating a book of classical Sanskrit poetry. In turn, Dr Bowles was asked to work on a book of one of the best known classical Sanskrit epics, the *Mahabharata*.

He was asked to become one of the 10 full time translators among the 40 translators who come mainly from Britain, USA and Canada. The *Mahabharata* was compiled between

400 BC and 400 AD and is one of the world's great pieces of classical literature. Dr Bowles will also translate some epic poems by Kalidasa, described as the Shakespeare of Indian literature. Dr Bowles will translate several books of the epic, whilst Dr Bailey is translating one.

'This is a real attempt to re-invigorate interest in Sanskrit literature in the West,' Dr Bowles said.

'Until the mid 1970s there was great interest in Indian studies, including Sanskrit, but this has been replaced by more utilitarian subjects caused by greater emphasis on economics,' he said.

'In the past there have been eras in which Sanskrit studies were popular in the West, one being in Germany in the early 19th century.'

About 20 of the 100 books in the series have already been completed and the remainder will be published between now and 2010. ●

Dr Bailey is also finalising a new book which will publish for the first time in English more than 7,000 verses from the classical Sanskrit Ganesh Purana, a text containing myths about the popular elephant-headed god Ganesh. These 7,000 verses have never before been translated into any European language.

ORDINARY PEOPLE'S POLITICS



MANY VICTORIANS seem unaware of the impact on their lives of the massive changes in government economic policy since the mid 1980s.

By contrast, they are aware of, but unfazed by, changed policies relating to social welfare, ethnic diversity, relations with Indigenous Australians, and many other policy swings over the past two decades.

These are among the findings of a team of La Trobe University political and social scientists resulting from research dating back to the 1988 Bicentenary year.

Led by Professor of Politics, Judith Brett, the team, comprising Dr Anthony Moran, Dr Uldis Ozolins, and Dr Guinever Threlkeld, conducted lengthy interviews with 48 'ordinary' Victorians from rural and urban areas.

'We were not interested in the views of politicians or other political "experts" but ordinary "people in the street" of all socio-economic levels and of all ethnic groups,' said Dr Anthony Moran, an ARC research fellow in La Trobe's Politics Program.

'We wanted to find out what they think and feel about their place in Australia and where their nation is heading.

'We wanted to know their views on issues like how globalisation had opened up Australia to economic competition with the rest of the world, the changing role of governments, changes to the social welfare system like work for the dole and mutual obligation, the changing ethnic make-up of the population, immigration and refugee policy and relations between Indigenous

and non-Indigenous Australians.'

Thirteen of the 48 participants had taken part in a similar survey conducted by the University of Melbourne in the late 1980's in which 42 Victorians were interviewed on the same subjects.

Conscious, but not concerned about the increasing disparity between rich and poor.

'We also wanted to discover whether those interviewed in the first survey had changed their views and how the views of all in the second survey differed from those in the first,' Dr Moran said.

'Given the huge economic changes since the mid 1980s, we had expected the participants would have seen the economic changes as important. We were surprised to find people had little to say about them,' Dr Moran said.

'The increasing disparity between rich and poor was not a concern although many were conscious of the presence of a growing underclass – of people somehow stuck in a bad situation, mainly those dependent on welfare. Although aware of their existence, they did not see their presence as a result of government economic or social policy.

'Most had never had contact with Aborigines but were aware that their situation in general was not good. Most

had a sense of sympathy for Aborigines but were unable to offer possible solutions to their problems.

'The second survey also indicated that Victorians feel OK about the impact on their society of ethnic diversity. Most said they appreciated its benefits – many citing diversity of cuisine as an obvious benefit.'

Dr Moran has already published a book on the survey results, *Australia: Nation, Belonging and Globalization* (Routledge, New York) and is now writing a book with Professor Brett, *Ordinary People's Politics* (Pluto, Australia), to be published next year. The study has been funded by the Australian Research Council. ●

Continued from page 7

'Whilst the surgery may take less than 20 minutes, women live the rest of their lives with the changes it brings. The old adage, "first do no harm" is significant in relation to caesarean section, particularly if undertaken when the risk benefit ratio is uncertain,' Ms Kealy said.

Although many believe the name caesarean comes from Julius Caesar, this is highly unlikely. Different researchers source the term to an ancient Roman law called *Lex Regia* concerning the burial of pregnant mothers which later became the *Lex Cesaria*, or from the Latin verb *caesaru* meaning to cut. ●



New bra helps after surgery

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY postgraduate nursing student, Ms Carolyn Naismith, has designed a special bra to assist women recovering from cardiac surgery.

In October Ms Naismith won the weekly award for her invention, called the Cardibra, on the ABC television program, *New Inventors*.

With the help of La Trobe Professor of Nursing, Annette Street, Ms Naismith is hoping to commercialise the vest-shaped bra which acts like a splint to provide support to women who are recovering from a sternotomy – splitting the breast bone – associated with cardiac surgery.

For several days following a sternotomy, women need breast support but cannot wear a normal bra which may crush the wounds and prevent easy dressings.

Ms Naismith made her new bra from fabric used in burns suits and it has no wire or hard material that could compress wounds. It is also designed to open so that it can be fitted to the patient on the operating table and later adjusted by tabs to allow the replacement of dressings. ●



'Cardibra' on the *New Inventors*.

Share in \$4 million stuttering research grant

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY is one of five universities to share a \$4.1 million National Health & Medical Research Council (NHMRC) program grant for research on stuttering.

The grant, over five years, is the largest by the NHMRC to investigate the causes and treatments of stuttering. A major La Trobe contribution will be to investigate the development of anxiety in stuttering.

The University's Stuttering Clinic in the School of Human Communication Sciences will be involved in a number of research areas, as well as the recruitment of participants for several projects.

Stuttering Clinic Director, Dr Susan Block, says the research will look in particular at the efficiency, access and self-management of stuttering and cover projects for both children and adults, but the main focus will be on children.

Dr Block, one of the project's six principal investigators, says the large grant was a Federal Government acknowledgment of the detrimental effect of stuttering on children and the implications on their quality of life and well-being.

Entitled *Equitable access to stuttering treatments: Developing distance and self managed treatment models*, the grant will be administered by the Australian Stuttering Research Centre at the University of Sydney. Other participants are Queensland, Newcastle and Macquarie universities.

Announcing the grant, an NHMRC spokesperson said stuttering was a serious problem for many people. Effective treatments were available, but there were not enough well-funded speech pathology services, especially in rural areas, to help all who need it.

Researchers aim to determine ways

to adapt existing treatments for distance learning to help rural patients who may not have access to speech pathology services. The research will also examine the effectiveness of self-management techniques to help people keep on top of their stuttering and prevent it from coming back.

Other research will look at social phobia – a form of extreme anxiety suffered by about half of the adults who stutter – and find ways to overcome it. Research in this program will also attempt to gain greater overall understanding of why people stutter.

Dr Block said this was the first time that allied health had received such a grant for program research. Such grants were usually given to medical researchers.

She said the La Trobe Clinic was involved in other stuttering research, including the impact of stuttering on adolescents, the effectiveness of student-delivered treatment of adolescents who stutter and a trial of a modified treatment – the 'Camperdown Program' – for adults who stutter. ●

HEALTH CARE AWARD

The La Trobe University Communication Clinic stuttering program was a finalist in this year's Primary and Community Health Network Awards for Innovation and Excellence in Primary Health Care.

The Awards – in four categories, Health Promotion; Direct Care; Organisational Development; and Outstanding Contribution in Primary and Community Health – were announced in October. The La Trobe program was in the Direct Care category.

The network promotes debate and influences policy development relating to primary and community health. ●

MS research

attracts US funding

The National Multiple Sclerosis Society of America has awarded \$US375,000 to a La Trobe University research team to pursue a new avenue of investigation into the mechanisms of nerve damage in MS.

‘It’s an area that nobody has tried before and if we are successful, there is the potential to design new drugs to modify the behaviour of MS-affected cells,’ says research team leader, Dr Jacqueline Orian.

A research fellow in La Trobe’s Department of Biochemistry, Dr Orian will receive \$US125,000 a year for three years to continue her investigation that began three years ago into the novel origins of nerve fibre damage in multiple sclerosis.

MS Research Australia has supported Dr Orian’s work for a number of years, assisting in her early investigations into understanding nerve cells and fibre damage.

A first of its kind in the world, Dr Orian’s research aims to determine how nervous system damage occurs in pre-symptomatic stages of MS.

‘My interest is in determining why specific supporting cells in the brain and spinal cord, known as astrocytes, which should contribute to the restoration of balance in a positive way, fail to do so

and at what point in the disease process this occurs,’ said Dr Orian.

At present, the La Trobe research team and collaborator, Dr Margaret Ayers of the University of Melbourne, have found evidence of nerve fibre damage, together with changes to astrocytes, prior to the onset of symptoms of MS-like disease in mice.

‘Astrocytes are known to be involved in later scarring that occurs in MS, but they have not previously been thought to be involved early in the disease. Our basic premise is to establish whether there is a link between these early changes and nerve fibre injury,’ Dr Orian said.

‘We have taken a path that is not technically easy because we do not know enough about the biology of these cells and how things might change in brain or spinal cord disease. Nobody has followed this path before.

‘We have been working in this area for three years and our initial results were encouraging enough for the American Society to provide these research funds.

‘We have shown that these cells have already undergone changes by the time nerve damage is observed but we are not yet aware whether the change is good or bad. We should know within the three years of the project whether their behaviour is detrimental.

If this is the case, the next step is to look at the possibility of designing a drug to modify this cell behaviour,’ Dr Orian added.

Other members of the research team are Mr Anton Ramp, who is working with Dr Orian on a Multiple Sclerosis Research Australia PhD scholarship, and Ms Dongwei Wang, whose PhD research is financed by the National MS Society of America. ●

La Trobe

Quest for new entrepreneurs

‘LA TROBE QUEST’ – the University’s Business Planning Competition – offers \$17,500 in annual prizes to encourage and promote young entrepreneurs.

Open to La Trobe students from all campuses, it supports the commercialisation of student projects and encourages co-operation across disciplines with a \$10,000 first prize sponsored by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Michael Osborne.

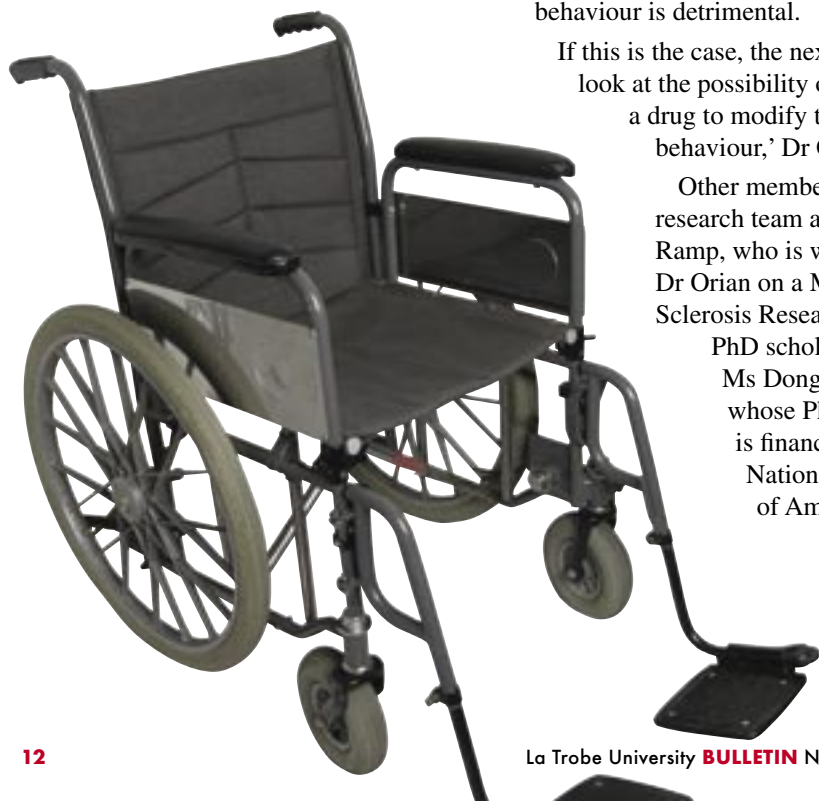
La Trobe Research and Development Park Director, Ms Sue Bell, says the quest also complements the University’s Technology Enterprise Centre incubation program and helps align student expectations with those of business. The R&D Park sponsors second and third prize.

Eight teams took part this year, six from Bundoora and two from the Albury-Wodonga.

The \$10,000 first prize went to Dirk Maclean, Shuyuan Jia and Tran Ngoc Tran, from the Graduate School of Management for their project, *X-Safe Quarry Services*, which offers ‘safe, secure and cost effective transport and storage of shotfiring accessories to the Victorian quarry industry’.

Second prize, valued at \$5,000, was won by Adrian Soh, Hector Almeida, Hakan Golbasi, Gautam Shetti and Jim Savage from the Faculty of Law and Management. Their business, *Alsa Office Solutions*, provides ‘value-for-money bookkeeping services by university students’.

Third prize of \$2,500 went to Seong-Hun Park, Tae-Sund Lee, Frankie Goh and Jo Lin from the Faculty of Law and Management. Their venture, *Connexion*, is a ‘location based service that allows a user to find their detailed location, or the location of someone else, via mobile phones’. ●





Former WTO Head, **Mike Moore**, honoured

FORMER HEAD of the World Trade Organisation and Prime Minister of New Zealand, Mike Moore – now Adjunct Professor in the La Trobe University Faculty of Law and Management – has been awarded an honorary doctorate by La Trobe University.

Professor Moore plays a significant role in promoting the MBA programs of La Trobe University, notably in the People's Republic of China, thereby helping develop Australian tertiary education overseas.

He was awarded his Doctor of Laws (*honoris causa*) in recognition of his 'contributions as a global leader and for his services to La Trobe University'. He has been previously honoured by more than a dozen governments as well as universities in the Americas, Africa, the Pacific and Europe.

Professor Moore was Director General of the World Trade Organisation from 1999 until 2002, and became well-known internationally as an articulate proponent of the advantages of a free and fair global trading system.

His term of office coincided with momentous change in the global economy and multilateral trade and brought the majority of the world's population within the rules-based trading system of the WTO. He introduced significant changes to the way the WTO operated, particularly

helping poor countries participate in the multilateral trading system.

La Trobe University Dean of the Faculty of Law and Management, Professor Raymond Harbridge, says Professor Moore, accompanied by the Head of the School of Law, Professor Gordon Walker and Professor Jianfu Chen, visited China in November.

Professor Walker, who is also Chair of Commercial Law, is a specialist in securities regulation and corporate governance in SE Asia and Australia, while Professor Chen is an expert in global governance, human rights and trade law.

The delegation discussed the globalisation of legal education and addressed students and staff at the Chinese University of Politics (CUPL) in Beijing and at Shanghai University School of Law.

La Trobe University and CUPL recently signed a Master of Laws articulation agreement and is now finalising a similar agreement with Shanghai University. This will be followed by a University delegation to the United Arab Emirates, headed by Professor Moore and Professor Harbridge, to explore educational opportunities in the region.

Professor Moore was New Zealand Prime Minister in 1990, and leader of the NZ Labour Opposition from 1990 until 1993. He has also served as Minister of Overseas Trade and Marketing, Minister of External Relations and Trade, and Deputy Minister of Finance.

Professor Moore was born in Whakatane, New Zealand in 1949. After early experience as a printer, meat worker, construction worker, social worker and trade union researcher, he became in 1972 the youngest Member of Parliament elected in New Zealand. ●

Honour for Vietnamese educationist

La Trobe University has awarded the degree Doctor of Education (*honoris causa*) to Professor Nguyen Xuan Vang, Rector and President of Hanoi University of Foreign Studies in Vietnam.

The award recognises his outstanding contribution to English language education in Vietnam and the development of international ties between the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and Australia – particularly with La Trobe University.

Professor Vang has worked closely with the La Trobe Faculty of Law and Management to develop a successful MBA program, and more recently the Bachelor of Business and Diploma of Business Administration.

Professor Vang holds degrees in Applied Linguistics and English Studies from universities in Hanoi and a Master of Arts (TESOL) from the University of Canberra.

Professor Vang has been Deputy Chair of Vietnam's National Foreign Language Curriculum Committee, Ministry of Education and Training, and is Director of English Training for Officials of the National Assembly, Supreme People's Court and Supreme People's Procuracy. ●



Conducting an *affaire*

French and Australians have different methods

IN FRANCE everybody handles a modest *affaire* the same way, while in Australia, everybody does it differently.

This is an early result of a collaborative research project underway between La Trobe University and the University of Burgundy at Dijon in France.

It is not as it first appears. The research was on how small and medium French *affaires* – *affaire* being the French word for a business enterprise – initiate innovation in their businesses compared to similar businesses in Australia.

‘To everybody’s surprise we found the way small and medium sized owner-managed manufacturing businesses in Victoria and in France initiate innovation was totally different,’ says Dr Vijaya Thyl, a lecturer in La Trobe’s Graduate School of Management.

With the Head of the Graduate School of Management, Professor Geoffrey Durden, and Professors Marcel Truche and Sophie Reboud of the University of Burgundy’s School of Business, they interviewed the heads of 23 small and medium sized manufacturing businesses in Victoria and 29 similar businesses in France.

The in-depth interviews on the sources of business innovation revealed a stark contrast. In Australia, almost everybody in a business, even customers and other outsiders, made substantial contributions to the ideas that advanced the business, new products, promotion, sales and overall commercial strategy. The head of the businesses listened readily to workers, customers, suppliers and others.

‘Everybody from the office receptionist to the people on the work floor contributed ideas,’ Dr Thyl said. In France it was quite different. All innovative ideas stemmed directly from



management, and mostly from the head of the enterprise. Very little came from people down the management chain.

The research also unearthed the probable reason for this. In Australia the vast majority of founders and owners of small and medium sized manufacturing businesses were immigrants, and thus had a diversity of work cultures and approaches to business. The one thing

they had in common was that all were prepared to tap staff, customers and others for ideas to enhance their business.

In France it was the opposite. In almost every case, small and medium sized manufacturing enterprises were run by native born French people and all had the same business culture. In the main, the only people contributing ideas about business innovation were the owner-managers themselves.

The researchers defined a small business in Australia as one with a workforce of less than 20. A medium business had between 20 and 199 workers. In France, because definitions are different, a small business had less than 50 workers and a medium business between 50 and 250.

‘One of the great challenges facing small and medium businesses which want to grow is how to engender an entrepreneurial spirit which leads to innovation, and how to keep that spirit alive,’ Dr Thyl said.

These different sources of innovation became apparent in the early stages of the data analysis which is currently being completed.

The joint research project was initiated when Professor Durden visited the University of Burgundy in 2003 to arrange student exchanges. He discovered that the University’s School of Business had similar research interests in small and medium sized business.

Late this year, La Trobe Graduate School of Management students spent three weeks in Dijon studying Business and Management in Europe, a unit in their MBA program. ●

Energetic young scientists show their stuff



Professor Finlay, left, and STAV President, Roger Morgan, right, inspect one of the projects.

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY in November hosted the annual Science Talent Search on its main Melbourne campus at Bundoora. Conducted by the Science Teachers' Association of Victoria since the 1952, the 'Search' is one of the longest-running and most successful programs of its type in the world. More than 700 bursary-winning exhibits from 164 schools were awarded \$25,000 prize money from sponsors.

The La Trobe Faculty of Science, Technology and Engineering is a major sponsor of the Search, and has hosted the annual awards ceremony and exhibition for the past 16 years.

This year's theme, *Energy: Future Challenges*, drew more than 2,200 entries, demonstrating the breadth of scientific talent among Victorian school children. Winning inventions ranged from a gutter cleaner, ore crusher and waste water electricity generator to solar catamarans, wind turbines and an infra-red water saver.

Opening the exhibition, La Trobe Dean of Science, Technology and Engineering, Professor David Finlay, encouraged students to continue their interest in science, to university and beyond.

'The exciting thing about an event like this is that somewhere in this hall there may be a future Nobel Prize winner, or an inventor who will go on to make a great difference.' ●

Continued from page 16

Sir David said he also reviewed the quality of science and the 'fitness to purpose' of science in every government department every three years. 'This is a new operation and the idea is to raise the quality of science advice right across government departments.'

He said his analysis of the state of science in countries around the world – which he carried out when he took up his government post in 2000 and also published in the science journal, *Nature* – demonstrated a relationship between scientific wealth and economic wealth.

'I do believe that science in all of its ramifications, whether it is in terms of the actual research or in terms of the skills base that is produced, is an essential part of the economic growth of all of our countries. So it is no surprise to see that there is this correlation. I was very careful to check before I came out, to see that Australia did not look too bad on this graph. Your wealth intensity is a bit above the UK, and our

science intensity is a bit above yours, but certainly Australia is a very big player in terms of international science.'

However, neither country matched the US when it came to wealth that could be generated from the science. 'The US is supreme at generating wealth from its science base. Japan also has been particularly good at the exploitation of their science base into wealth.'

'There is no better investment a country can make today in terms of maintaining its competitiveness as we move forward in a globalised economy than through investing in science and skills.'

Sir David was heavily involved in producing the UK's ten-year Science and Innovation Framework, 2004-2014, and has published more than 420 papers in scientific journals. He retains his professorial post in chemistry at Cambridge University and while at La Trobe was also able to meet members of the University's surface chemistry group. Thanking Sir David for his contribution, La Trobe Science and

Technology Dean, Professor Finlay, noted the value of Sir David's proximity to top-level government in developing science policy in the UK.

'The effectiveness of your organisation within government is an important message for us all in Australia. The example about responding to incidents like foot and mouth disease was salutary and, of course, climate change is also being very fiercely debated in this country.'

Professor Finlay said Sir David's input in advising government on science funding 'is also dear to my own heart and something that occupies a lot of time for deans of science in this country.'

'I was also deeply impressed by the amount of funding that industry in the UK is able to provide – which is certainly not the case in this country at this time.' ●

Sir David King's speech is available on www.latrobe.edu.au/news/2005/mediarelease_2005-95.php.

Visit by Britain's top scientist highlights the importance of

Science at the Heart of Government



Flood control, global warming, tsunami alerts, genetic modification of crops, defence, crime prevention, foot and mouth disease, drug addiction, third-world poverty – not to mention the day-to-day business of economic development and national wealth generation....

The centrality of science to our existence – and the urgent need to make it a core business of government in the 21st century – was brought home dramatically by Sir David King, Chief Scientific Adviser to the British Government, when he delivered this year's La Trobe University Science Lecture.

La Trobe Dean of Science, Engineering and Technology, Professor David Finlay, said the lecture was a salutary lesson to Australia of the critical need to boost scientific agendas within government.

While visiting La Trobe's main Melbourne campus at Bundoora, Sir David also accepted an Honorary Doctorate from the University for his contribution to science and science policy.

The title of his lecture was *Science at the Heart of Government*. Sir David heads the UK Office of Science and Technology and advises Prime Minister, Tony Blair, directly on scientific issues.

He has oversight of a £2.4 billion science budget, set to rise to £3.3 billion by 2007/8 and a team of eight chief scientific advisers – 'appointed like myself, largely from the university sector, parachuted into government, with the ability to operate science professionally at the very top'.

Sir David cited a broad range of national benefits that flowed from this: from Britain's rapid mobilisation against foot and mouth disease (he chaired Britain's Foot and Mouth Disease Science Panel in 2001 and its Genetic Modification Science Review Panel in 2003) to rekindling national centres of industry where Britain today 'can boast the largest number of high-tech industry clusters outside the USA.'

Science, if heeded, can also help governments deal with natural hazards. For example, he said studies into the seismic potential of major plate boundaries more than 25 years ago predicted one of the highest risk zones off Indonesia – site of the earthquake that caused last December's catastrophic Indian Ocean tsunami.

Britain's research councils are funded at 'arm's length from government.

As Chief Scientific Adviser and head of Science and Technology, Sir David has a staff of around 150, chairs Britain's key science committees and is also a member of a number of cabinet committees.

'I'm responsible to the Prime Minister for science across government – science advice and the science research base as well – and the coordination of science policy issues across government. This is a large task, especially with a government that is fully understanding of the ramifications of science.'

While science may be at the 'heart' of British government, Britain's research councils are funded for research at 'arm's length from government'.

'The chief executives and their boards are independent of government. All we do is cut up the cake, divide it amongst them and let them get on with the work.'

Turning to science within government, Sir David said: 'We have science and innovation strategies from each department, and each of these strategies has to go through my department to be clarified, to be improved, before it goes to the Chancellor of the Exchequer for approval on the budgeting. So we have a double step operation.'

He said Britain recently established the Global Science and Innovation Forum, which he chairs. 'This is the only body in government that pulls together all players on the international scene in science, engineering and technology. The Foreign Office, the Department of International Development, the British Council, the Royal Society and the research councils all sit on that Forum.'

'Because the Prime Minister is particularly concerned about society being brought along with some of the advances that science can deliver for it, he has been keen that we establish a science and society group.' One reason for this was the public's difficulty in accepting genetically modified foods, which represent a 'massive economic opportunity for the UK'.

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