

Bulletin

REFUGEE RESEARCH

Divining water

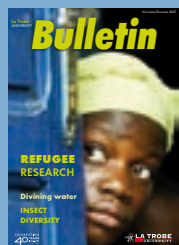
The case for
INSECT DIVERSITY

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Appointment of DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLORS



Professor Brown



Professor Probert

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY has appointed two Deputy Vice-Chancellors.

They are Professor Tim Brown, currently Dean of the College of Science at the ANU, who will become Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), and Professor Belinda Probert, former Dean of Arts at the University of Melbourne, who will take up the post of Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic).

Vice-Chancellor Professor Paul Johnson said he was delighted that two people with such strong credentials in academic, research and higher education policy and planning have accepted offers to join the University. They will take up their appointments in the near future.

The appointments come as La Trobe University is finalising its ten-year strategic plan for implementation from the start of next year. Professor Johnson said the context in which the University will operate during the next decade will be different.

'The new appointments are part of a process to ensure that La Trobe University will be in a strong position to respond to changes in the higher education environment which benefit our research, teaching and learning activities.'

Professor Belinda Probert has previously held positions as Dean of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Melbourne and Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) at the University of Western Australia.

Professor Probert's teaching and research expertise has been built in the disciplines of politics and sociology, where she has worked on employment policy, gender equity, and work and welfare reform.

A leading sociologist, she is widely recognised for her research on the changing nature of work and employment, new patterns of inequality, and social policy and women's work.

From 1997 to 2003 Professor Probert served on the Australian Research Council's Research Training and Careers Committee and was a member of the Social Behavioural and Economic Sciences Expert Advisory Panel. She is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia and a founding director and member of the Board of the Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, established by the Commonwealth Government to promote and advance tertiary teaching and learning in Australia.

Professor Tim Brown is currently Dean of the College of Science at the Australian National University, prior to which he was Professor of Statistics and Head of the Department of Mathematics and Statistics at the University of Melbourne.

Professor Brown is recognised as one of Australia's top statisticians and has an extensive record in consulting and applied research over a wide variety of areas of science and management with clients from private industry, government and the university sector.

His primary applied research and consulting in the last ten years has been in education, tertiary selection and the effects on society. The latter has led to major changes in the Victorian Certificate of Education, in the reporting of results in schools and in tertiary selection in Victoria and Australia. ●

LA TROBE - CSIRO LINK

to boost medical research

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY and the CSIRO have formed a new collaborative venture to strengthen Australian research in molecular science.

The initiative focuses on greater collaboration in areas such as biomaterials and regenerative medicine, electro-active materials, biotechnology growth partnerships and medical imaging for early disease detection.

It was launched in March and held its inaugural 'Aurora Symposium' in September, emphasising research into malarial vaccines and diagnostic imaging.

The initiative is between CSIRO Molecular and Health Technologies (CHMT) and La Trobe's Faculty of Science Technology and Engineering, initially with the School of Molecular Sciences. It encourages greater alignment of research and networking in priority areas of molecular and chemical sciences.

It also provides joint access to critical infrastructure and postgraduate scholarships for national and international PhD scholars, jointly funded and supervised by La Trobe and CSIRO. ●

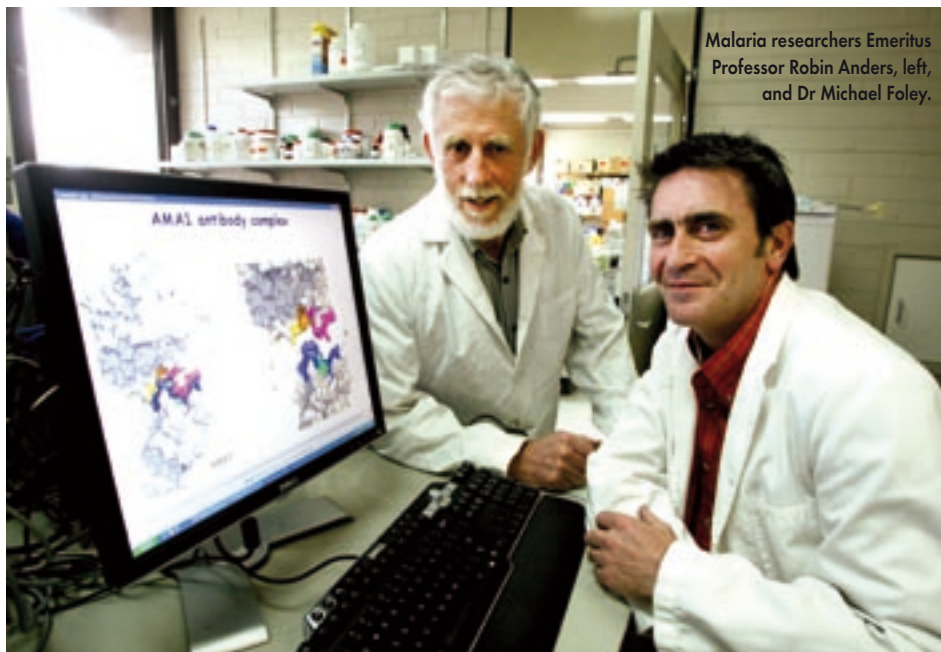
See full report, page 5.

MALARIA, CANCER, CROP LOSS AND WATER CRISIS

New research grants

The University has received almost \$10 million in the latest rounds of major Federal Government research grants.

Seven La Trobe University research teams – working on projects related to cancer, malaria and cerebral palsy as well as community, refugee and mental health – have been awarded more than \$4.2 million in the 2008 National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) grants.



Malaria researchers Emeritus Professor Robin Anders, left, and Dr Michael Foley.

An additional 15 University projects have won \$4.7 million from the Australian Research Council (ARC). These range from studies to help fight plant diseases that cause devastating crop losses and food spoilage world-wide, to research into more effective allocation of water resources between rural and urban sectors.

The ARC grants also support the design of pure carbon-based materials for frontier nano-electronics industries using the new Australian Synchrotron, and a major six-nation maths project. The maths research plays a central role in modern physics, biology, chemistry, astronomy, meteorology, and geoscience – and will also strengthen Australia's links with the mathematical software industry.

A further \$1million has been awarded for five ARC Linkage grants. These will be used to establish a facility to help develop electronic devices of the future that rely on emerging materials such as diamonds, fullerenes and magnetic molecules – and to study the safety and effectiveness of family mediation where violence is present.

Continued page 4

La Trobe staff on RQF panels

Three members of the University have been appointed to assessment panels for the new Australian Research Quality Framework (RQF).

Professor Simon Crowe, Head of the School of Psychological Science, will serve on the Psychology, Psychiatry, Neurological, Behavioural and Cognitive Sciences Panel, while Professor David de Vaus, Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences, has been appointed to the Social Sciences and Politics Panel. Earlier, Professor Erich Weigold, who retired as Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) this year, was selected to Chair the Physical, Chemical and Earth Sciences Panel.

The panels assess the portfolios of research groups submitted by higher education providers, and award ratings for research quality and impact, as part of the RQF process which begins in 2008. ●

Gold Medal for educational leadership



LA TROBE UNIVERSITY
Chancellor, Ms Sylvia Walton, has won the top award from the Australian Council for Educational Leaders for her services to education.

A contributor to the development of education policy in both the government and non-government sectors, Ms Walton was described as 'one of Australia's foremost principals'. She was cited for having 'overseen remarkable achievement and success, particularly at Tintern Girls Grammar School' where she worked for many years.

Ms Walton was also recognised for her long-standing contribution to education policy. She has been a member of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board, the Victorian Boards of Studies, the Victorian Institute of Teaching Accreditation Committee and the Association of Independent Schools.

Congratulating Ms Walton on winning the award, Vice-Chancellor Professor Paul Johnson, said the University derived great benefit from Ms Walton's wide experience as an educator and her in-depth knowledge of the Australian school system.

The Australian Council for Educational Leaders (ACEL) is the major professional association for educational leaders, with members from Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and other parts of the world. ●

New research grants

from page 3

The NHMRC projects include:

Refugees: Dr Ignacio Correa-Velez from the University's Refugee Health Research Centre has received \$420,250 for a study into adult refugee men, *see report, page 8*.

Relationships: \$1,575,250 has been awarded to a group from La Trobe's Australian Research Centre for Sex Health and Society for its Longitudinal Study of Health and Relationships. The study began in 2005 and involves more than 8,000 people throughout Australia. Researchers include Professor Anthony Smith, Professor Marian Pitts and Dr Julia Shelley.

Cancer: \$535,500 went to biochemists Dr Hamsa Puthalakath and Dr Li Wu for research into an important mechanism associated with cell-death known as apoptosis. Understanding that process is essential for developing drugs that can make cancer cells kill themselves, or prevent other cells from dying when they shouldn't.

A further \$452,750 has been awarded to another project for the design and development of new anti-cancer drugs which are more efficient at killing cancer cells. This work is led by biochemists Dr Suzanne Cutts and Professor Don Phillips.

Malaria: \$416,625 was awarded for malaria research designed to inhibit the invasion of red blood cells by a plasmid involved in spreading malarial infection. Malaria kills more than one million people a year – one child every 30 seconds – most of them in Africa. The research team, led by Dr Michael Foley and Dr Andrew Coley, is studying the structure of the plasmid's membrane antigen as a possible way of blocking infection.

Some of the ARC projects are:

Plant diseases: \$315,000 over three years for research into a plant defensin that has been shown to protect

transgenic cotton against fungal infection and has potential for broad-spectrum fungal disease control in other crops. The grant was awarded to Professor Marilyn Anderson, Biochemistry, and Dr Kim Plummer, Botany.

Water crisis: \$259,083 over three years for research into allocating water resources between rural and urban sectors by Research Fellow, Mr Joel Byrnes and Dr Lin Crase, Associate Professor in Economics and Director of the Albury-Wodonga campus.

Nano-electronics: \$368,000 over three years for research into carbon-based materials, which will play an important role in nano-electronics industries in an attempt to place Australia at the forefront of a new area of surface and device science. The project will employ facilities at the new Australian Synchrotron and is led by physicists Dr Chris Pakes and Professor John Riley.

Global maths: \$825,000 over five years for an international project involving seven world experts from six countries in new ways of solving differential equations. The equations play a central role in modelling scientific phenomena in physics, biology, chemistry, astronomy, meteorology and geoscience. The work, led at La Trobe by Professor Reinout Quispel and Dr Will Wright, will also significantly strengthen Australia's links with the mathematical software industry.

Violence and mediation: A \$129,800 grant will support a study into the safety and effectiveness of family mediation as the favoured method of resolving disputes involving violence. More than 20 per cent of women are estimated to experience family violence, with far-reaching effects on emotional well-being, health, family stability and child development. The project is being carried out by Dr Helen Cleak, Social Work and Social Policy, in conjunction with Relationships Australia. ●

CLEVER MOLECULES GROW

out of new CSIRO collaboration

'I'm a chemist. I can do almost anything,' says Dr Andrew Hughes.

He can make molecules that dissolve in water, others that fluoresce at a particular wavelength, even smarter ones that bind to particular receptors.

He can test organic potatoes for traces of pesticides, find chemicals that smell like sea water and generally make a song and dance out of anything with a few carbon atoms strung together.

Dr Hughes is in the business of selling his profession with the aim of building research links and exploring fresh avenues of research.

La Trobe University has numerous researchers working in different fields of chemistry.

Now, through a new collaborative research program with CSIRO Molecular and Health Technologies, researchers and postgraduate students will have access to many more scientific minds working in advanced areas of health, advanced materials and biomedical research.

'It's the people that count,' says the La Trobe chemist, 'and CSIRO has some very good scientists.'

The first formal exchange of intelligence took place in September when more than 150 scientists and students from La Trobe and CSIRO attended the inaugural Aurora Symposium at La Trobe.

Others will follow as the two groups build research teams in materials science, chemical science and



Aurora Symposium participants, from left, CSIRO Chief Research Scientist Dr Calum Drummond; La Trobe's Dr Hughes, and Head of Chemistry, Professor Robert Brownlee; Drs Stewart Nuttall and Paul Savage, CSIRO; La Trobe PhD student, Reshmi Kiran, CSIRO's Dr Patrick Hartley and conference organiser, Dr Polyzos.

biochemistry. CSIRO will top up the funding for five postgraduate Aurora scholarships, providing stipends of \$25,000 a year and access to the facilities at Clayton.

Protection from cholera

A first project off the rank is a molecule to protect people from cholera. This could have great application for personnel sent on peacekeeping roles to trouble spots around the world.

Cholera is a water-borne disease that feeds off disaster. It flourishes in the aftermath of floods, cyclones and wars and has some potential to be a biological agent used by terrorists.

The research is therefore high on the national security agenda.

'Cholera lives in the gut,' says Dr Hughes. 'As it lives and

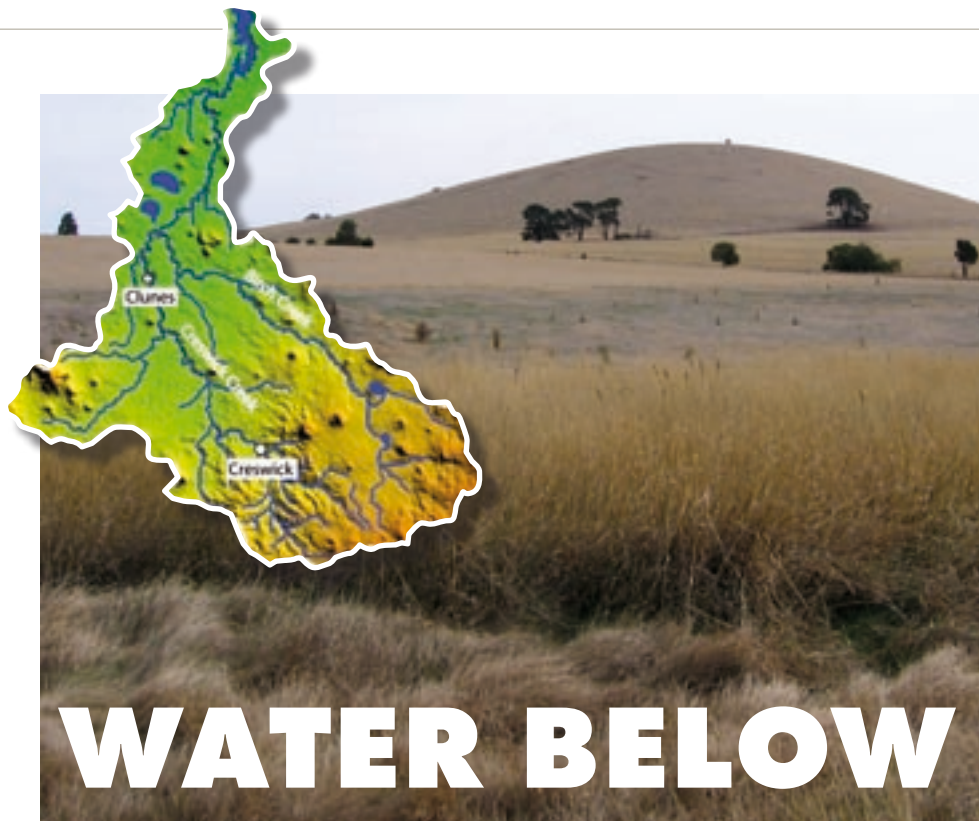
breeds it produces a toxin that the body absorbs. It's this toxin that can kill you or at least stop you working while you are treated.'

Dr Hughes and his counterpart at the CSIRO, Dr Anastasios Polyzos, have designed a molecule containing sugar units that should bind to the toxin and prevent it from being absorbed through the wall of the gut.

The molecule could be taken orally to provide short-term protection for those entering a cholera-prone area.

The next stage will be to get a PhD student from La Trobe making and screening the molecules for biological activity.

'The project will fit beautifully into the collaborative research program with the CSIRO,' says Dr Hughes. ●



WATER BELOW

The art of divining is still alive

Who says that Australia is geologically boring? The green basalt plains around Clunes in Central Victoria have seen their share of exciting geological events.

Twenty million years ago earthquakes disrupted the sediments of sand and gravel along the riverbed of the ancient Loddon River, and two million years ago about fifty volcanoes were erupting and punching holes in the earth's crust.

These geological events are not just part of the colourful history of the area – although they did result in the gold-bearing sediments going missing in the Creswick area. They are of vital importance when it comes to locating groundwater in our drought-stricken times.

La Trobe geologist Dr John Webb has the first detailed map of a 30 by 40 kilometre region around Clunes that shows the contours of the water-bearing sands to 100 metres below the surface.

The map, built on the toil of Honours student Sarah Hagerty, will be used by local water authorities to pinpoint the best places for drilling for water to supplement the region's dwindling supplies. These are generally the thickest sections of the aquifer where water has been accumulating for up to 20,000 years.

Dr Webb said that the reserves are a third less than would be expected by the lay of the land. 'When we looked at this area in detail we found that the sediments along the buried riverbed are not continuous. There is actually a lot less sediment and groundwater than people first thought.'

Ms Hagerty used data from hundreds of bores drilled in the area. Many contained no evidence of sand. She used this data to draw up the map which also shows the cause of the disruption – earthquakes along a series of faults that cut across the area.

The La Trobe research will be fed into the calculation of the permissible annual volumes (PAVs) of water that are drawn from the reserves. The good news for farmers is that the reserves are being topped up, continuously but slowly, by rainwater entering through the volcano craters.

The geologists are working in other areas of the State, filling in the gaps in our knowledge by using this new art of water divining. ●

PAT DODSON on the future of reconciliation

IS RECONCILIATION DEAD? What is the way ahead? Aboriginal leader and activist Patrick Dodson addressed these key issues when he delivered the La Trobe University Centre for Dialogue Annual Lecture in October.

Professor Joe Camilleri, Director and founder of the Centre, said dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians was essential to overcome past dispossession and hurt and to share in the wisdom of Aboriginal Australia

Speaking on *Reconciliation: Two Centuries On, Is Dialogue Enough?* Patrick Dodson described the 'dysfunctional relationship' between the Australian government and the 'tragic public policy mess' defining that relationship.

He spoke about three major themes: the idea of leasing land as the 'practical and symbolic instrument' of government which would make Indigenous people 'culturally invisible'; the use of 'wedge politics' to demonise and ridicule; and the lack of formal dialogue.

Patrick Dodson said dialogue needed to be 'concerted and comprehensive'. It should involve developing relationships, not only between Indigenous Australians and government, but also with industry and the wider community. He said there was goodwill by many towards Indigenous people, but the process required 'bold and imaginative' government leadership. ●



DON'T RISK A HANGOVER FOR LIFE



DESPITE A CONSTANT barrage of media health advice, many Australians risk ending up with a hangover for life by ignoring the warnings against excessive alcohol consumption.

In the worst case scenario, ten years of social drinking can lead to impairment of memory and mental processing ability so that a 35 year-old is just able to fulfil his or her work duties.

These findings keep Martin Jackson, Director of La Trobe's Psychological Science Clinic, on the media trail, pushing for constraints on advertising, calling for the government to run more health alerts.

Recently, as the chair of Arbias – Australia's only organisation treating alcohol related brain damage – he authorised a hard-hitting campaign which warned that two million Australians risk permanent brain damage because of their drinking behaviour.

The Hangover for Life campaign released new Roy Morgan research revealing that 70 per cent of men and 59 per cent of women still did not know safe limits – six standard drinks a day for men and three for women.

Teenage boys were particularly optimistic, believing that brain damage would only result if they drank a slab a day over eight years or more.

Mr Jackson is particularly sceptical about advertising by the industry. Even the oft-quoted myth that two glasses of red wine a day help guard against heart disease could be just that – a myth based on suspect research.

A recent re-analysis of the data on which the recommendations are based showed that many of the non-drinkers in the control group were actually heavy drinkers who had given up.

The fact that they had more heart disease than those who drank two glasses a day was likely to be a feature of their past drinking history rather than evidence for the benefits of the antioxidants in red.

'Everything is contentious when it comes to alcohol,' Mr Jackson says. 'The government has put in \$125 million to stop illicit drug use but only \$25 million for alcohol.'

The problem is that in the early stages of brain damage the irritability and anger

associated with symptoms could appear to be work-related issues.

'They look very similar,' says Mr Jackson. 'If you are drinking more than six drinks a day and are concerned about your memory go and get assessed. If you stop drinking your chances of recovery are good.'

It is easy to slip into unsafe drinking practices, Mr Jackson says. A bottle of wine with dinner will take you over the safety limit.

Australian beverages are higher in alcohol content than their overseas equivalents: beer has five per cent alcohol compared to two per cent in England and wine 11 per cent here compared to 3-4 per cent in Italy.

Alcohol has a direct toxic effect on the body, burning away the white matter of the brain, he says. ●



Mr Jackson: Everything is contentious when it comes to alcohol.



Dr Correa-Velez

PROBING the experiences of **REFUGEE MEN**

THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT needs to take greater responsibility for helping refugees integrate, according to a La Trobe University researcher who has just received a \$420,000 grant to investigate the health and resettlement experiences of refugee men.

Dr Ignacio Correa-Velez, Deputy Director of the University's Refugee Health Research Centre, says the recent debate sparked by Immigration Minister Kevin Andrews' comments that Sudanese refugees are struggling to integrate, has ignored the Australian community's role in assisting them to fit in and has highlighted the need for more research into the area.

'Many of the responses to his (Mr Andrews) comments were "show us the evidence of this". It's very difficult when you are making assumptions on a few anecdotal cases,' Dr Correa-Velez says.

'Every community over the past 50 years that has arrived here has faced challenges as well. There's no empirical evidence that the African community is facing more challenges than other communities. And, if that is happening, it is a responsibility of the services that are in place to help them to integrate into Australian society and to be more responsive to their needs.' Dr

Correa-Velez, himself a migrant, says he was attracted to Australia because of its tradition of a 'fair go', and that it was a just and peaceful country. However, he says attitudes towards refugees over the past few years have hardened, and he feared Australia succumbing to the 'compassion fatigue' that was taking hold in Europe.

'I think over the last few years there has been confusion within the general public. There are different categories of migrants, there are skilled migrants, business migrants, independent migrants – those in the refugee and humanitarian program are migrants not by choice but by need.'

Coming from often horrific backgrounds of war and displacement and having lost years of their lives when living in refugee camps with no access to health services, employment and education means these migrants often have great needs but also greater hopes for making a good life in Australia, he says.

'They arrive here with issues that we need to respond to and we need to help.'

Dr Correa-Velez says the debate has proved the urgent need for research in the area. He was 'pleased and relieved' to get the news that, after three attempts with a variety of funding bodies, his

research project *Talking the walk: A longitudinal study of refugee men's health and resettlement*, had received a National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) grant.

His research will follow the experiences of 242 recently-arrived refugee men in Queensland over two years, looking at issues including how social and cultural issues impact on their health; barriers to employment; and the key factors that help or hinder them in building social networks within their ethnic community and the wider Australian community. Based on the government's refugee intake, half of the participants will be Sudanese, with other African nations, the Middle East and Burma also represented.

The focus on men is deliberate, he says, as there is a dearth of research on men internationally because research targeted at women and child refugees is more likely to gain support.

'There is a lack of research not only on their physical and mental health but also areas of employment, education and family issues. We know, for example, that there are a lot of changes in gender roles and difficulties in getting recognition for their skills.'

Dr Correa-Velez hopes that his research will lead to improved services and support for refugee men and their communities, both in Australia and overseas, and provide a much-needed outlet to express their experiences and perspectives to the wider community to reduce stereotyping, discrimination and racism.

Dr Correa-Velez, who was awarded a four-year NHMRC Postdoctoral Research Fellowship in 2006, has extended the La Trobe partnership to Queensland, where he is carrying out his research with the Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma (QPASTT) in Brisbane. His fellow researchers, Professor Sandy Gifford, Dr Adrian Barnett, and Ms Donata Rossi, are based at La Trobe University, the University of Queensland and QPASTT respectively. ●

Friends of murder victim **speak of regrets**

Friends can play a major role in monitoring the potential for family violence, says La Trobe University researcher Dr Patricia McNamara.

The social worker has done the first known study of a friendship group of a victim of partner homicide – and her remarks are drawn from their heartfelt responses to the murder.

‘The women witnessed bruising in their friend and did not explore it with her,’ Dr McNamara says. ‘They did not want to intrude and ask questions. They have enormous regrets because she was murdered not long after.’

The women were members of a hobby group. Casual groups such as these can be very important in the lives of abused women, says Dr McNamara, because territorial men tend to isolate their partners, carefully choosing and vetting friends for them.

The victim, whose name has been suppressed to protect the identity of her friends, eventually opened up to the group and said that she got strength from her relationship with them. This gave her the courage to leave her partner.

Unfortunately, says Dr McNamara, the period after leaving the marital home is the most dangerous in a violent, territorial relationship. The woman was killed six weeks after she left.

Dr McNamara set up the focus group at La Trobe so the five women could talk about the impact of the murder on their lives.

‘One woman now carries cards for a women’s self-help organisation. If she witnesses any inappropriate imbalance of power or aggressive talk within a partnership she separates the woman from the group and asks her about it.’

Not everyone chooses to intervene to this extent, Dr McNamara says, but all of the friends have become hyper-vigilant.

‘They now have strong views about the socialisation of children regarding relationships. One has started early and is vigilant about how her children relate to their friends. Any expression of

violence is not tolerated.’

Parenting issues such as raised voices, verbal aggression and fathers that ‘bellow like bulls’ have also been addressed by the women.

‘It’s the anger and the physical threat behind the voice that is frightening for a child,’ Dr McNamara says.

The women themselves also report feeling extremely threatened by verbal aggression since the death of their friend. This is the case even when the aggression is not directed at them.

Dr McNamara’s findings are supported by quantitative research into domestic homicides.

‘The further you get from a metropolitan area the higher chance there is of a woman being killed in domestic violence,’ Dr McNamara says. ‘In remote areas injuries are not noticed and it is not easy to reach out for support. It is also much harder to leave.’

Dr McNamara’s study has been used in New Zealand and Australia to publicise the international effort by policy-makers and child and family welfare specialists to contain the problem.

Researchers from Australia, the US, the UK and Italy presented a range of child and family research findings at a Round

Table discussion in late August, co-hosted by La Trobe’s School of Social Work and Social Policy and the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare.

The researchers are members of the International Association for Outcome-based Evaluation and Research in Family and Children’s Services.

The forum gave Australian practitioners new insights into a diversity of contemporary approaches to child welfare internationally, including prevention, intervention, reunion and rehabilitation of families in which children have been neglected or abused. ●





The pleasure of **GREEK**

‘Can the language survive in Australia?’ asks linguistics expert Alexandra Aikhenvald

Iconic Greek hang-outs like Café Greco in Chapel Street could soon become the sites of an ambitious study which seeks to record the influence of Aussie English on the Greek language.

Linguistics researchers will accompany Greek speakers on their daily lives, recording their café chat, breakfast banter, jokes and conversation and later analyse it in terms of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and social context.

The Research Centre for Linguistic Typology at La Trobe (jointly with the National Centre for Hellenic Studies and Research) has received an ARC Linkage grant of \$500,000 over five years to do the research.

The project, in collaboration with the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Greek Government, will compare communities in Australia and South America – possibly Argentina or Brazil. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the style of Greek spoken in the diaspora has some marked differences to the national language.

‘When young Australian Greeks go back to Greece people often accuse them

of not speaking properly,’ says linguistics researcher, Professor Alexandra Aikhenvald, the Associate Director of the Research Centre.

She gives an example. The Greek word *depózito* means water tank. This is close to the English word ‘deposit’. Australian Greeks now use *depózito* to refer to a deposit in a bank. To a speaker of standard Greek this would be unintelligible.

Another example concerns gender. The words for boy – *pedi* – and girl – *koritsi* – are neuter but Greek speakers in Australia often refer to *pedi* as ‘he’ and to *koritsi* as ‘she’, just as they would in English.

The way people select their words is of great interest to Professor Aikhenvald and Director of the Centre, Professor Bob Dixon, who have compiled grammars for many of the world’s endangered languages.

Professor Aikhenvald jokes about the girl in Papua New Guinea who called her long dark locks ‘father hair’ because anything big is given this gendered description.

Professor Dixon makes a parallel with an Australian language he recorded in which a full rainbow is called a ‘grandfather rainbow’ and a half one, a ‘father rainbow’. Professor Aikhenvald gives another Greek example. Older Greeks often put articles before Christian names. Professor Dixon would then be referred to as The Bob.

Exploring the differences between languages is of major consequence in terms of the survival of culture. Professor Aikhenvald hopes the new study will address some of these important issues.

‘How do community languages survive in multicultural Australia and elsewhere? How do they change to fit in with the major language spoken around them? Do they become similar to English? If yes,

in what way? And what are the prospects for the survival of immigrant languages in different countries under different conditions?’

The Greek language, with 4,000 years of documentation and extensive use in communities outside its traditional domain, is a fruitful area for study of how languages in contact evolve, survive and can be maintained, she says.

‘What makes Greek special? It has one of the longest histories of documentation. Its role in European civilisation and culture cannot be underestimated. Greek is pluricentric – it is spoken in numerous areas. It has the status of an official language in two countries – Greece where it is currently spoken by about 11 million people and Cyprus with half a million speakers.’

Outside Greece there are more than 5.5 million Greek speakers in 92 countries across five continents. Australia has the third largest concentration with 700,000 speakers and Greek is the second most common community language in Melbourne and Adelaide. ●

Language scholars meet

Fifteen of the world’s top linguistics scholars gathered at La Trobe University’s recently, shedding light on the ways in which the human mind operates.

Whether we are engaged in anti-terrorist surveillance or global trade deals, trying to foster social cohesion or scientific research, deep knowledge of the way languages operate across cultures is essential.

Professor Aikhenvald says: ‘About three thousand languages are spoken across the five continents of the modern world. Are they all able to express the logical relations that we take for granted in English?’ ●





IF IT IS TRUE that the upsurge of interest in Irish and ethnic identity in Australia is a ‘form of resistance to globalisation’, it has reportedly bypassed the home country from which so much of this Antipodean phenomenon emanates.

According to Irish political scientist Professor Brigid Laffan, in Melbourne recently to address the 15th Irish-Australian Conference at La Trobe University, the global outlook from the emerald isle itself is quite the opposite.

Ireland, according to Professor Laffan, is one of the great success stories of globalisation, and an economic role model for other small states – partly as a consequence of its membership of the European Union (EU), but particularly because the Irish people and polity have not resisted globalisation.

‘The *Journal of Foreign Affairs* does a globalisation index every year and in 2001-02 Ireland was the most globalised country in that index. It’s now fallen to about fourth, but Ireland has an extraordinarily open economy. It lives on its relations with the rest of the world.’

Professor Laffan says this is because Ireland opted in the 1960s to move from protectionism to export-led economic growth. ‘It is also partly because of our membership of the EU. There’s very significant American and multi-national investment in Ireland.

‘This is probably one of the success stories because Ireland’s a country that

was open to globalisation and benefited from it, so you tend not to get the anti-globalisation forces you get in many European countries where there are fears that jobs will go.

‘Sometimes you do get that rhetoric, because jobs are now migrating from Ireland to central Europe and to Asia, but the evidence is that we’re still creating jobs – it’s just that there are some jobs we won’t get to keep.’

While there was a sense of the potential impact such dramatic global changes might have, from the Irish point of view globalisation was perceived as opportunity rather than threat.

‘I think it’s even partly because of the historical experience of emigration. There is a sense that there are Irish everywhere in the world; that Ireland may be small but we’re part of a bigger global network.’

Professor Laffan – Jean Monnet Professor of European Politics in the School of Politics and International Relations and Principal of the College of Human Sciences at University College, Dublin – is one of the world’s foremost scholars of the European Union.

In her address she previewed her next book – her 12th on the European Union. While at La Trobe, Professor Laffan also talked with undergraduate students

Conference convenor Dr Ridden, left, with Dr Philip Bull, Director, IUEU Centre, La Trobe; Professor Bronwen Walter, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge; Dr Colin Barr, Ave Maria University, Florida, USA; and keynote speakers, Professor Laffan and Dr Rebecca Pelan, University College, Dublin.

in Irish history. The unit is taught by Irish historian Dr Jennifer Ridden, recently appointed lecturer in Modern European History, who was also convenor of the conference.

Dr Ridden says contributions to the conference offered new ways of thinking about how the Irish deal with the cross-national structures of Empire and Europe – indicating the evolution of a more nuanced understanding of what it meant to be Irish in a colonial context, and what it means today.

She says two of the more important presentations were those exploring the development and expansion of an Irish Catholic Empire, and transformations in Irish nationalism at the turn of the 20th century, which probed changing interactions between Ireland, Australia and New Zealand. ●

Professor Laffan was in Australia as guest of Vice-Chancellor, Professor Paul Johnson, and the La Trobe University-based Innovative Universities European Union Centre, one of three in Australia. It is funded by the European Union and six Australian universities: La Trobe, Macquarie, Newcastle, Murdoch, Flinders and Griffith.

ISLAND COLONISATION BIOLOGY

sheds light on the real wealth of nations



Professor New in front of a portrait of Ian Thornton.

STUDIES INTO how plants and animals colonise and establish communities on new or sterilised islands – for example those formed by volcanic activity – are yielding significant insights for those times ahead when we will have to repair large tracts of damaged or devastated ecosystems.

Such islands are natural laboratories for biologists and La Trobe University, through the efforts of its foundation Professor of Zoology, the late Ian Thornton, has been a leader in this type of research since the early 1980s.

In a book *Island Colonization: The Origin and Development of Island Communities* – completed posthumously by colleague Professor Tim New, Head of the Department of Zoology, and published by Cambridge University Press this year – Professor Thornton writes of climate change. He predicts that in the short term the bottom lines of national economies will take precedence over global concerns.

‘Large-scale rapid consumption and destruction of some of the Earth’s non-renewable or slowly renewable resources will continue – and at an accelerating rate.’

However, he says eventually ‘more and more countries will come to regard their plant and animal species, and the ecosystems that they help to form, as part of their nation’s and the world’s natural wealth. Crucial to any attempts to restore, or recreate a natural ecosystem will be some knowledge of its “embryology”, how it has arisen and developed naturally.’

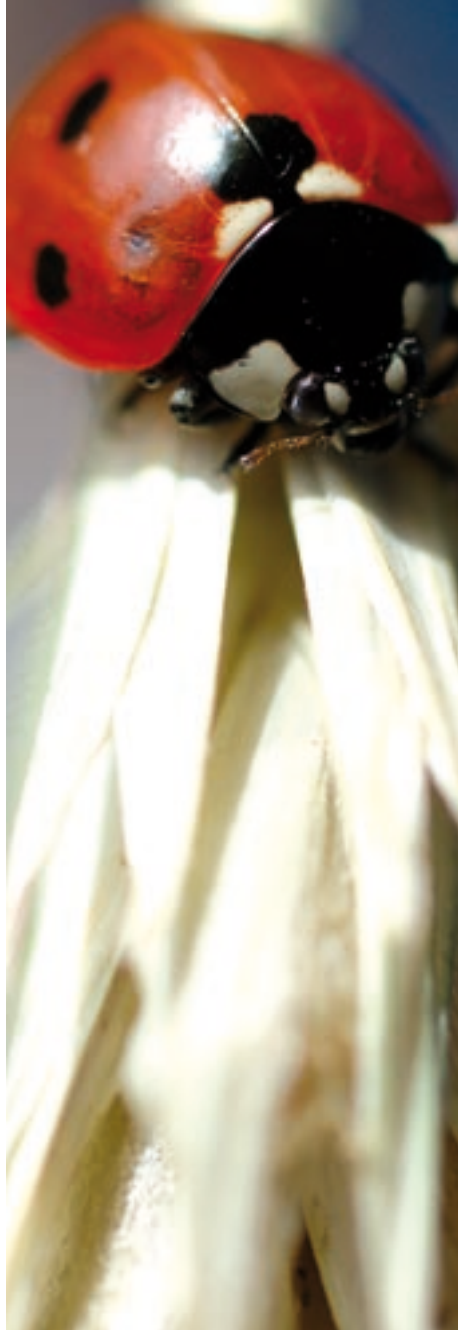
Ian Thornton’s enthusiasm for science, field work and sense of adventure inspired generations of students.

For more than a decade he led a high-profile research program into all aspects of the re-assembly of a tropical forest ecosystem on the Indonesian Krakatau archipelago, which was devastated by volcanic eruption in 1883. Highly regarded by the international biogeographic community, this work involved seven major expeditions and more than 60 scientists from 20 institutions in eight countries. Professor New accompanied Professor Thornton on four expeditions to Krakatau as a specialist on insects and other invertebrates.

Professor Thornton led his last international expedition of nine scientists to a remote volcano north of New Guinea in 1999 when he was aged 73. He died in 2002. Amongst the papers he left behind was his incomplete manuscript on island colonisation, the last of many words he wrote on this subject. And an express wish that Professor New should finish the book.

As well as a range of books going back to *Darwin’s Islands* (1971), a classic on the Galapagos, and publications in *The Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, Professor Thornton’s Krakatau work has been incorporated into teaching programs in biogeography at overseas universities and in an Australian biology text for secondary schools. ●

SAVING INSECTS DOWN ON THE FARM



Many people have been conditioned to think of insects as pests. They have neither appreciated the beneficial roles native insects and other invertebrates play – in soil ecology as pollinators and consumers of pests – nor the dire economic consequences should these roles fail.

Now, a book by Professor of Zoology, Tim New, seeks to help farmers improve their understanding of the diverse range of insects in agricultural ecosystems, a key arena for invertebrate conservation.

‘For example,’ says Professor New, ‘mass loss of pollinating insects already means some crop managers have to hire humans to do the job of bees.’

After decades of conservation effort, work by entomologists like Professor New and market pressure against insecticide residues in produce, many farmers are now sympathetic to more ecologically sensitive crop protection.

His book, *Invertebrate Conservation and Agricultural Ecosystems*, published by Cambridge University Press, builds on this understanding. The book has two purposes: to introduce principles of crop management to invertebrate conservation biologists, and the need and rationale of invertebrate conservation to agricultural producers.

It analyses research into such practices as leaving unsprayed field margins, conservation of hedgerow trees, ‘within-field habitats’ for natural enemies of crop pests, planting density, and biological control methods.

The last of these, says Professor New, is particularly controversial, as it may involve releasing insects from overseas and concerns that these may spread and invade more natural ecosystem. The pros and cons of pesticides are presented, with the emphasis on balance rather than controversy.

‘There has been a tradition of antagonism between agriculture and conservation,’ Professor New says. ‘In this book I explore the common aims of both. Now when I talk to farmers’ groups, I have an audience largely sympathetic to landscape management that incorporates measures for

invertebrate conservation.’

With some 36 per cent of the world’s land area devoted to agriculture, there has been great loss of biodiversity through alienation of more natural ecosystems. Many insects and other organisms occur only in tiny isolated fragments of their former wide range.

Invertebrate Conservation and Agricultural Ecosystems puts the case for conservation rather than the continued neglect of insect diversity and other animals that interact with crop production. As an entomologist, Professor New is at his most passionate advocating on behalf of these less conspicuous species.

‘For example, an entire “decomposer community”, unknown to most people, inhabits the top few centimetres of soil: snails, slugs, nematodes, millipedes, slaters, woodlice, mites, springtails and worms, to name a few. Arthropods – insects, mites, springtails – are particularly important. Some are called the “webmasters of ecosystems” for their role in releasing nutrients from leaf litter.

‘Parallels occur in many other ecological processes. Most of the important organisms involved in these are almost entirely unknown, other than to a handful of specialists.

‘Many cannot be identified. Even when identification guides exist, many are out-of-date. Reflecting the vast diversity of insects, most entomologists focus on one order (or, even, family) of insects. Many insect orders contain more species than all the vertebrate groups put together – and the chances of a beetle specialist identifying small flies or tiny wasps is remote.’

While fragmentation of habitat through land clearance has had a major impact on many insects, Professor New says other threats include pollution, pesticides and the introduction of exotic species – ‘and conservation measures must heed future changes such as in climate’.

The book, one of nearly 30 by Professor New, was recently reviewed in *BioScience* and *Bulletin of the British Ecological Society*, which commend it for taking on the importance of invertebrates and their conservation in the ‘ecological deserts’ we call farms. ●



From left, PhD student Edwin Wise, Neil Fetling, Vince Alessi, and Dr Hogan.

CULTURAL FOCUS ON **PHILIPPINES**

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY academics are helping strengthen what they regard as neglected links between Australia and the Philippines.

For five years the University has been a partner in the Philippines-Australia Studies Centre (PASC) with Ateneo de Manila University.

‘The Philippines are very relevant to Australia today with growing trade and security links in the region,’ says Head of PASC and Deputy Director of La Trobe’s Thesis Eleven Centre for Critical Theory, Dr Trevor Hogan.

This year the connections were extended with the launch of an undergraduate student exchange program. Two students from Ateneo attended La Trobe while two from here studied at Ateneo for one semester.

Dr Hogan says the currency of much exchange this year has been cultural.

Senior lecturer in Visual Arts and Design at the Mildura Campus, Neil Fetling, completed a three-month artist-in-residency at Ateneo. In October,

on the main Melbourne campus at Bundoora, he gave a lecture on his experiences in Manila.

The PASC program also brings to Australia once a year the winner of that country’s National Young Artist Award. Nominations from 90 Filipino galleries are used to select the artist, who then exhibits at View Street Gallery in Bendigo, and visits the Bendigo, Mildura and Bundoora campuses as part of the fine arts program.

Neil Fetling says: ‘Manila teems with humanity and wrestles, more than many other global cities, with incongruous cultural hybridism, fervent Christianity, primordial animism and Spanish and American Imperialism.’

His residency was followed in June by a touring exhibition from the La Trobe Art Collection, *My Country: Abstract Interpretations of The Australian Landscape*. Described as the ‘first of its kind in SE Asia,’ it was curated by Vince Alessi, La Trobe Art Museum Director, and opened by the Australian Ambassador to the Philippines.

The exhibition was part of a colloquium organised by the Thesis Eleven Centre and PASC at Ateneo de Manila University. It brought together artists, theorists, philosophers, environmental historians, and sociologists to discuss the links between nature and society ‘at a time of crisis in our capacities to organise and develop sustainable forms of economic development.’

Dr Hogan says the Philippines is located at the ‘crossroads of the Asia Pacific, close to China, Taiwan and Japan, with strong western influences due to its history of Spanish and US colonisation’.

‘With such multi-cultural influences, Filipinos are in some ways similar to Australians in that they have a very responsive, reactive and at times humorous way of dealing with the world.’

In the social sciences, three La Trobe postgraduate students are currently working on research related to the Philippines and two Ateneo students are applying for doctoral scholarships to La Trobe. ●

Deregulation of Aussie accent

Something is happening to the way we speak in Australia ... and you can hear it in the lecture theatres and tutorial rooms of La Trobe.

While grappling with his day job teaching journalism in Media Studies, Dr Lawrie Zion has been listening to his students as carefully as he hopes they listen to him.

Why? Because for a large part of this year Dr Zion also researched and wrote a one-hour documentary for ABC television about the Australian accent.

'The Sounds of Aus', hosted by John Clarke, was broadcast in November and is now available on DVD.

The story was told through interviews with linguists, historians, social and political commentators, as well as comedians and actors, including Rachel Griffiths, Bruce Beresford, Bert Newton, Max Gillies, Denise Scott, Mary-Anne Fahey, Santo Cilauro, Simon Palomares, and Akmal Saleh. Third year La Trobe Media/Law student Erdem Koc also appears in the documentary

'Our mission,' says Dr Zion, 'was to examine where the Australian accent came from, where it's heading, and what it says about us. On the latter point, one thing is clear: we've shed the cultural cringe that made the "received pronunciation" of the English upper class a kind of linguistic role model. Nor is the Ocker accent as important as it once was in defining our national voice – fewer of us speak like Hoges or Steve Irwin. ●



Help for refugees

from page 16

Instead, because of a change of regime in Uganda and a delay in the promised funding, he found himself in Melbourne as a refugee.

With few of his kinsfolk around to defray the culture shock, social alienation and personal challenges, the young African learned to fend for himself, working nights and grabbing a few hours sleep before rushing off to classes to get his PhD and a better life.

Dr Nsubuga-Kyobe has never forgotten his own struggle or the despair of many other young Africans who followed him – some as students, some as refugees, others as migrants, all facing the hardships of social and cultural dislocation.

Now a lecturer in management and organisational behaviour at the Shepparton campus, Dr Nsubuga-Kyobe dedicates his skills, education and much of his life to ensuring today's refugees and migrants are better integrated into Australia's communities, and better matched to employment opportunities.

'To get this job,' he says, 'I had challenges. I still had challenges even when I was qualified. I understood what migrants go through. And I wouldn't think my experience was the worst, because so many of these people come from war-torn places, many with interrupted education, without resources – not only Africans, but

refugees from all parts of the world.

'I saw those people brought here before these assistance programs started up. I saw what they went through; you had people dying alone and not connected to anything. We had to do something.'

And he did: Dr Nsubuga-Kyobe was instrumental in establishing many of the African-Australian community groups and refugee settlement projects that help African-Australians in Victoria today, including the Melbourne-based African Holistic Settlement Services project and the Goulburn Valley Ethnic Professionals Association, both regarded as national role models.

He has also written government-funded and NGO reports evaluating and benchmarking settlement services for African communities. He has taken part in local, regional and State migrant consultative processes to help successful settlement.

In January, he received a certificate of appreciation from the Australian Government for his contribution to the settlement of refugee families in Shepparton.

Dr Nsubuga-Kyobe is now seeking funding and industry support for a research project under the auspices of the University's Centre for Sustainable Regional Communities to investigate migration in the Goulburn-Murray region, comparing patterns of successive waves of migrants.

'We'll be looking at where they came from, where they settled, what their skills were, what they brought with them, what skills they've acquired since arriving, what seems to have been converted to something useful – and then we'll look at more recent arrivals, the Albanians, the Afghans, and the Africans, and their skills.'

At a conference on cultural diversity and social harmony in Shepparton in September, Dr Nsubuga-Kyobe spoke about links between skills and employment opportunities for African Australians.

The conference was hosted by La Trobe, in association with the Shepparton Inter-Faith Network, the Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District and the City of Greater Shepparton. ●



STUDY TOURS **PROBE REFUGEE ISSUES**

About 50 La Trobe University students have learnt first-hand about the complex issues that can follow global development and disasters – issues such as human displacement, flight and seeking refuge.

The students took part in study tours to Bangladesh and Bosnia-Herzegovina, conducted by the School of Social Sciences' Refugee Health Research Centre (RHRC).

The tours were led by RHRC Director Professor Sandy Gifford and Deputy Director Dr Ignacio Correa-Velez in partnership with Lew Hess, Maria Tucci (Foundation House) and Professor Ron Adams and Mr Hariz Halilovich. Professor Gifford said learning took place through 'cultural immersion and engagement'.

The tours were for a second and third year anthropology unit, 'Development and Forced Displacement'. The Bangladesh tour was designed in partnership with the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture.

Twenty-four students spent 22 days in Bangladesh last December. They visited key research and service delivery agencies in the capital, Dhaka, including the Bangladesh Rehabilitation Centre for Trauma Victims, the UN High

Commission for Refugees and the Australian High Commission. They also attended seminars by the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit affiliated with Dhaka University and then spent time in the field.

This included visiting displaced communities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and a 24-hour journey up-river to learn about life in a religiously diverse village – gaining insights into the complex communal relations between Muslims, Hindus and Christians and learning about the stateless Biharis.

Professor Gifford said the tour also provided insight into the impact of the British Raj and how colonialism had 'left its imprint on the lives of people in Bangladesh'.

Another tour took place mid-year: three weeks in Bosnia-Herzegovina during which students participated in an international conference in Sarajevo examining genocide and its prevention. They visited Mostar, Blagaj, Medjugorje and Srebrenica, and Graz, Austria. The group also attended a service at Potocari commemorating the 1995 Srebrenica massacre of an estimated 8000 Bosniak males, and spent eight days in Klotjevac, an 'ethnically cleansed' Bosniak village

near Srebrenica, where they joined in the daily life of a shattered community trying to reconstruct itself.

'Students learned a lot about the causes and consequences of the war and forced displacement, as well as the impact of reconstruction and rehabilitation in post-conflict societies,' Professor Gifford said.

Having seen the hardships facing these people, the students organised two fundraising photo exhibitions for them, at the Brunswick St Gallery in October and at the Malthouse Theatre in November.

See Research in Action 'The Health of refugee men' page 9

WE HAD TO DO SOMETHING ...

AND HE DID!

When Ugandan-born academic Dr Apollo Nsubuga-Kyobe arrived in Australia 21 years ago he believed he was here as a student, courtesy of the Australian Government's Australian International Development Assistance Bureau and the International Confederation of Trade Unions, which had offered to fund his studies.

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