QUEENSLAND BIOSCIENCE PRECINCT OPENING ➤11

► Unigreen Awareness Day 5  |  ► Great Court Race 6  |  ► Thanksgiving Service 7
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VICE-CHANCELLOR’S MESSAGE

The launch of the Queensland Bioscience Precinct (QBP) at UQ’s St Lucia campus on May 21 represented a major achievement for UQ, CSIRO and Australian bioscience. The precinct, which houses UQ’s Institute for Molecular Bioscience (IMB) and three divisions of CSIRO, was jointly opened by Queensland Premier Peter Beattie and Minister for Education, Science and Training Dr Brendan Nelson.

The joint unveiling was unusual in the sense that two senior political leaders from opposing political parties joined together to celebrate this important milestone. It reflected the cooperative approach that has underpinned the development of the QBP – it was funded jointly by the Queensland Government, the Federal Government’s Federation Fund, with a further generous contribution from The Atlantic Philanthropies.

UQ and CSIRO also made significant financial contributions to develop a precinct which provides a world-class environment for biological research, development and commercialisation.

The QBP shows what can be achieved when important players take a joint approach to funding and developing strategically important projects.

Biological technology in its many forms is one of the major growth areas for the future. I am convinced that the QBP will help lay the foundation for the next phase of Queensland’s economic development.

Professor John Hay
Vice-Chancellor
UQ will be one of three Queensland universities jointly hosting the southern hemisphere’s first International Biology Olympiad (IBO).

The eight-day event will attract the world’s top Grade 12 science students who will put their biology knowledge to the test.

Queensland University of Technology (QUT) and Griffith University (GU) will also play hosts to the July 2004 IBO with more than 700 people from 50 countries expected to attend.

At an April 17 meeting, IBO Chair and UQ Associate Professor Mary Garson signed a Memorandum of Understanding with UQ Vice-Chancellor Professor John Hay, QUT Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Coaldrake and GU Vice-Chancellor Professor Glyn Davis.

Dr Garson of UQ’s School of Molecular and Microbial Sciences said it was the first time the event had been held outside Europe and Asia in its 15-year history.

“For Queensland to win the host rights to this high profile event gives us the winning edge in profiling our significant education, business, scientific and tourism opportunities,” she said.

Other people attending the meeting included Queensland Minister for Innovation and Information Economy Paul Lucas and 2000 IBO silver medallist and third-year UQ Bachelor of Science student Maria Barker.

During the competition students will sit a four-to-six hour theoretical exam and four practical exams held in laboratories.

“It is also a chance for Australia’s top biology students, the researchers and scientists of tomorrow, to test their mettle against the world’s best,” Dr Garson said.

Ms Barker, who hopes to complete her honours and eventually a PhD in immunology, said she would be helping to train the 2004 Australian team.
Queensland Environment Minister Dean Wells will be on hand to promote public place recycling by launching the Environmental Protection Agency’s Wastewise Program at the UQ Centre on June 4 at noon.

A free sausage sizzle will follow the launch at 12.30pm on Oval 4 outside the UQ Centre.

UQ’s Unigreen Convenor Gary Portley said a special appearance by children’s favourite Whizzy the Waterdrop along with recycling relays and displays would emphasise the themes of water and waste.

“The aim is to raise awareness at UQ and among the local community about improving our environment through an appreciation of waste and water issues,” Mr Portley said.

“Recycling relays will be held to complement the launch of the Wastewise Program while Whizzy the Waterdrop wanders around the campus reminding everyone to conserve water.”

UQ’s Environmental Management Centre Director Professor Tor Hundloe, Institute for Sustainable Futures Director Professor Stuart White and ABC Four Corners journalist and environmental author Ticky Fullerton will present a free public lecture at the UQ Centre at 6.30pm entitled Our Water – Our Future.

With 2003 being the Year of Freshwater, the lecture will aim to raise awareness of water issues and explain how the environmental decisions we make today will affect us in 2020,” Mr Portley said.

“It will raise awareness about environmental management on campus and emphasise the importance of sustainable living,” he said.

During the day, children from UQ’s kindergartens will display their sustainable living projects and sculptures and the winners of a reverse garbage sculpture competition will be announced.

Other activities will include environmental talks and various competitions highlighting environmental issues.

“It will be an environmentally-friendly action-packed day and we encourage everyone to get involved,” Mr Portley said.

Competition prizes include two nights accommodation at the luxurious Kingfisher Bay Resort on Fraser Island and family passes to Sea World and UnderWater World.

Event sponsors include the Environmental Protection Agency and Energex.

Unigreen is a promotional arm of UQ encouraging responsible environmental management throughout the University and the wider community.

It ensures UQ has systems in place to increase recycling, reduce energy consumption and minimise water use.

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From left: Whizzy the Waterdrop, Professor Hundloe, Property and Facilities’ Leigh Thompson and Jai Ryder from Campus Kindergarten.
Alcohol study
People thinking about reducing their alcohol consumption are needed for a UQ study. Psychiatry researchers within UQ’s School of Medicine are undertaking a trial of correspondence-based management of people experiencing depression who may be drinking at levels harmful to their health.

Participants must be living in Brisbane or its immediate surrounds, want to reduce their alcohol consumption and be willing to complete several forms during the three-month program as well as follow-up forms every three months for a year.

Information: 1300 300 164

Ankle motion study
Participants are needed for UQ research into the effect of joint mobilisation on post-fracture ankle motion.

“The aim of the research is to increase our knowledge of the effects of manual therapy commonly used by physiotherapists,” said fourth-year student Jessica Hackworth.

Participants must be aged between 18 and 65 years and need to have fractured their ankle in the past two years. They will be required to complete two to three 30–40 minute manual therapy intervention sessions at UQ St Lucia.

Information: 07 3365 4528

Can I commence a LLB degree mid-year?

You can apply now to commence in July 2003.

The TC Beirne School of Law is now offering a direct entry mid-year intake into the Bachelor of Laws (LLB) Program for fee paying Australian students.

Offers will be made to those students meeting the same entry requirements as the Semester 1 intake for 2003.

Don’t miss the opportunity to study law in the school that has educated many of the finest lawyers and judges in Australia.

To find out how to apply or for further information, please contact Andrea Peirce at the TC Beirne School of Law on (07) 3365 3498, email a.peirce@law.uq.edu.au or visit www.law.uq.edu.au

Vocational expo
Medical students and doctors are encouraged to attend a vocational expo at the Royal Brisbane and Women’s Hospital (RBWH).

Entitled Making careers happen, it will be held on June 13 from 6.30–9.30pm in the dining area, Level D, Block 6, RBWH, Herston Road, Herston.

It will provide details about training opportunities for medical students and junior doctors.

Registration: 07 3636 1524

The University of Queensland Australia

Apply now to commence in July 2003

First-year science student Daina Surka was well aware of the prestige attached to winning the 19th annual University of Queensland Great Court Race held on May 21.

The rising track star has eyed victory in the time-honoured event since first hearing of the race during her high-school days at Brisbane Girls Grammar.

Ms Surka said despite being a first-year student her ambitions to win the Great Court Race were long in the making.

“I heard about the race a few years back and it was something I had in mind and aspired to win when I enrolled at UQ,” Ms Surka said.

The 636-metre one-lap dash around UQ’s Great Court is based on the Cambridge University race, as featured in the film Chariots of Fire.

Ms Surka held off rival Sophie Curtis to win the Great Court Race at her first attempt in a slick time of 1.46.05.

The 18-year-old, last year’s Queensland Girls Open 800m Champion, finished strongly to outgun pre-race favourite Curtis (1.48.82) and Amber Peckston (1.53.25).

The open women’s record is held by Sandra Dawson who covered the distance in 1.41.68 in 1993.

Leo Mewing, a national under 20 800m finalist, confirmed his potential on the track with an impressive victory in 1.30.30 to edge out 2001 Great Court Race winner Stuart Bowden (1.30.66) in the men’s event.

The second-year town planning student learned from his fourth placing last year to storm home ahead of Bowden and promising athlete Robbie Rankin (1.32.18).

The men’s race record is 1.26.40 set in 1988 by four-time winner Simon Still.

The second annual Great Court Handicap 70m sprints were won by PhD student Bradley Pease and fifth-year business management/science student Muira Taylor, who defended her 2002 title.
More than 700 people attended UQ’s annual Thanksgiving Service on May 7 to express appreciation for the generosity of anatomy donors.

Attendees at the UQ Centre event watched as students passed light from a central candle to a series of candles representing the different disciplines that gain knowledge from the bodies of donors.

Thanksgiving Service Chair Leo Brown from the School of Biomedical Sciences said the atmosphere had been serene and dignified resulting in many positive responses about the format.

“As the lighting of the candles was taking place the auditorium was consumed in an awe of respectful silence,” Mr Brown said.

“The Queensland Kodaly Youth Choir then sung an angelic mantra providing a powerful yet dignified demonstration of the respectful appreciation for the selfless gifts.”

More than 120 family and friends of deceased donors as well as members of the medical and allied health professions, government and community groups attended the service.

It commenced with an academic procession of more than 70 staff and students including UQ Chancellor Sir Llew Edwards.

“The service gave students and staff a unique opportunity to demonstrate their appreciation for the donation of bodies to science and teaching,” Mr Brown said.

“Families and friends of donors also had the opportunity to formally farewell deceased relatives and recognise the importance of the donation.”

During the welcome address Deputy Vice-Chancellor (International and Development) Professor Trevor Grigg said UQ recognised and appreciated those who had donated their bodies for the ongoing education and professional development of students.

Mr Brown said the service, led by Reverend Pierre van Blommestein of UQ’s Chaplaincy Services, had included prayers and readings by members of various faith groups as well as staff and students.

Medical student Heather La Borde said she was impressed by the supportive comments from donors’ families.

“Now that I’ve spoken to the families of the donors I feel very humbled and privileged to know these people had consciously donated their bodies so we could gain a better knowledge and understanding of the human body,” she said.

The names of donors are also inscribed in the Book of Remembrance, which is displayed in the Otto Hirschfeld Building foyer at UQ St Lucia.

A candle lighting ceremony formed the central element of a multi-faith service for anatomy donors last month.

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New bike symbols

Cyclist-friendly bike symbols have been introduced at UQ’s St Lucia campus as part of a trial project.

Last month the recently converted two-way Sir William MacGregor Drive was painted with yellow bike symbols between the boathed and CityCat terminal.

“Not only do the symbols show cyclists where they are expected to cycle, they remind motorists of the presence of cyclists and are located a safe distance away from parked cars to avoid the common problem of people opening their doors and accidentally hitting a cyclist,” said urban cycling advocate Michael Yeates, who is completing a PhD at UQ examining community consultation in transport policy and urban planning.

UQ Property and Facilities organised the bike symbol implementation as part of a trial project designed to encourage cycling to reduce traffic congestion and parking pressures.

Other tasks to be completed in the near future as part of the cyclist-friendly project include alterations to Sir Fred Schonell Drive and College and Thynne roads.

Centenary Medals

A number of members of The University of Queensland community were honoured with Centenary Medals, announced by Prime Minister John Howard last month.

The medals were designed to mark 100 years of nationhood and recognise the extraordinary contributions made by a diverse range of Australians to the development of the country.

A list of UQ recipients can be viewed at www.uq.edu.au/news/index.phtml/article=4399

Members of the congregation looking at the Book of Remembrance.

First-year occupational therapy student Claire Conole lighting a candle.
Alumnus of the Year
Nominations for the 2003 UQ Alumnus of the Year award are now open.

The Alumni Association of The University of Queensland Inc is seeking nominations of graduates whose distinguished achievements have brought national or international recognition to UQ and in whose development the University has had a significant role.

Nominations with curriculum vitae should be marked “in confidence” and forwarded to Bruce Clarke, Chair, Alumnus of the Year Committee, Alumni Office, The University of Queensland, St Lucia 4072 by May 30.

GO8 appointment
University of Melbourne Vice-Chancellor Professor Alan Gilbert became Chair of the Group of Eight universities on May 9, replacing UQ Vice-Chancellor Professor John Hay.

Professor Hay was Chair from January 2002 and was an active interlocutor with government during the higher education review and with business on commercialisation issues.

Quality audit
Up-to-date information about UQ's June 2–5 Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) audit is available online at www.uq.edu.au/quality

The AUQA audit panel will test and validate statements and descriptions made by UQ in its 2003 Performance Portfolio.

The May 2003 newsletter at www.uq.edu.au/quality/index.html?id=10941 includes details about UQ's actions following submission of the Performance Portfolio to AUQA; a visit by audit panelists to the Mt Eliza Business School in Melbourne to investigate offshore offerings; AUQA's requests for further information; and the audit visit program, including identification of interviewees.

Fossil rocks science
With the body of a hippopotamus, the beak of a turtle and the tusks of a walrus, a clumsy terrestrial plant eater may force a rethink on what is known about the age of the dinosaurs, according to a UQ palaeontologist.

Research by Associate Professor Tony Thulborn from UQ's School of Life Sciences has revealed that mammal-like reptiles called dicynodonts survived in Queensland well into the Cretaceous age of dinosaurs.

Dr Thulborn and his wife Dr Susan Turner, an honorary research associate at the Queensland Museum, identified dicynodont fossils in the Cretaceous rocks of Queensland that were only 105 million-years-old.

Their discovery contradicts the long-held belief that dicynodonts declined to extinction in the late Triassic period around 220 million years ago – before the rise of dinosaurs.

“We could say dinosaurs didn’t rule the Earth – they ruled the majority of it, but not Queensland,” Dr Thulborn said.

“In most parts of the world every large land animal of Jurassic and Cretaceous age was a dinosaur.

“The only exception was Queensland where some of the big land animals weren’t dinosaurs but dicynodonts.

Dr Thulborn and Dr Turner’s research was published in the Proceedings of the Royal Society of London, Biological Sciences in March.

The discovery was made after reanalysing fragments of a skull found in Hughenden in Queensland in 1914.

The six pieces of fossil bone from the left facial region had been studied in 1915 by the then Assistant Director of the Queensland Museum Heber Albert Longman, who noted the resemblance to the dicynodonts.

As the fragments were believed to have been too recent in age to be a dicynodont they went back into the museum collection in 1915 where they remained until 2001.

“It’s only an accident of history that Longman wasn’t the person to announce the discovery of a Cretaceous dicynodont,” Dr Thulborn said.

“Every anatomical feature in the specimen is found in dicynodonts – there isn’t a single exception.

“In fact, some of the features are only found in dicynodonts.”

The discovery more than doubles the known duration of dicynodont history and leaves a large part unrepresented in the fossil record.

“It is quite a surprise because palaeontologists don’t usually expect to encounter such extreme anachronisms,” he said.

“For us poking around in the Cretaceous, it’s astonishing to find a dicynodont – a creature that was supposed to have been extinct 110 million years earlier.

“We thought dicynodonts existed for 60 million years but these findings suggest they survived for nearly three times that long.”

Dr Thulborn said the discovery was a reminder of how incomplete scientific understanding of the fossil record may be.

“Sitting there in Queensland, hitherto unknown and unsuspected, the dicynodonts survived two mass extinctions and watched the dinosaurs rise to dominance,” he said.

“Who knows, the dicynodonts might even have outlasted the dinosaurs.”

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Search for HyShot

The recovery of the successful HyShot™ II experiment still hangs in the balance after a recent intensive UQ ground search did not locate the payload in the South Australian desert.

The University of Queensland Alumni Association Inc provided $8000 funding for a 10-day expedition last month to try and locate the second stage rocket and the historic HyShot™ II experiment in a remote north-westerly region of the Woomera Prohibited Area in South Australia.

Alumni funding has also made it possible for the HyShot™ team to organise recovery of stage one of the two-stage Terrier Orion Mk 70 rocket used to boost the scramjet payload to a speed of Mach 7.6 in the experiment on July 30, 2002.

“The predictions of the likely impact area are good. We are confident we can recover the scramjet experiment in due course,” said HyShot™ team leader Professor Allan Paull of UQ’s Centre for Hypersonics.

“However, recent good rain in the region has led to extensive growth, making the ground search an extremely difficult undertaking.”

Scramjets are air-breathing supersonic combustion ramjet engines.

They are set to revolutionise the launch of small space payloads, such as communications satellites, by substantially lowering costs.

They could make flights of only several hours between Australia and Britain possible.

The successful scramjet experiment – the first in the world – validated information already captured in UQ’s T4 ground shock tunnel, one of the few facilities on earth capable of conducting ground-based scramjet experiments for flight Mach numbers of 8 or higher.

Professor Paull led a recovery team of 14 University staff, family and volunteers in 4WD vehicles.

They included chief engineer Dr Hans Alesi, computer and electronics engineer Dr Ross Paull, electronics engineer Bert Paull, Dr Ian Tuohy of BAE SYSTEMS Australia, and IT specialist Gordon Clarke.

They encountered challenging driving conditions during the three-day ground search. There were six metre high sand dunes, washouts, rabbit warrens, rugged mallee and black acacia forests, and saltbush-dotted savannah woodlands.

The team overcame a number of mechanical problems, including 10 flat tyres staked by dense undergrowth, and transmission difficulties.

Not so easy to conquer were the swarms of flies, scorpions and dingoes hovering in the background.

The search was conducted using three 4WD vehicles travelling in tandem, 100 metres apart, searching a 20 square kilometre area in methodical six by three kilometre grid patterns around the nominal impact point. They were guided by Global Positioning Satellite coordinates determined from Dr Ross Paull’s calculations.

“After the flight experiment was completed, as the scramjet plunged back to the ground, one of the ground crew, Mark Farley of DSTO, managed to take a picture of the vapour trail,” Professor Paull said.

Four sets of telemetry (radio) tracked the flight, including the final seconds when the experiment occurred. A narrow beam of telemetry tracked by Steve Hall of ARDU, combined with the vapour trail photograph, helped triangulate the likely resting point of the experiment.

“University zoologist Professor Gordon Grigg had a brief look for the scramjet during his annual aerial kangaroo survey of the region last year but was unable to find it,” Professor Paull said.

“It’s clear that the environment requires a different approach and that an extensive aerial search combined with a ground search will help us recover the payload to assist us in our next launch.

“At the time, we were interested in the experiment itself but now we’d like to know the answer to such questions as how the instrumentation heated during launch and at what stage did it burn up during the experiment.”

We are confident we can recover the scramjet experiment in due course.
The Rockefeller Foundation has provided US$650,000 to Professor Shu Fukai and Adjunct Professor Ken Fischer from UQ’s School of Land and Food Sciences. The grant will help fund research into the physiological characters providing drought tolerance for rain-fed rice systems in the Mekong region of Asia.

Professor Fukai said part of the research would be conducted through partnerships between UQ and the National Agricultural Research Systems in the region. “We are aiming to find rice plants and varieties that will cope with drought,” Professor Fukai said.

“It is the most important food source in the world – more than two billion people rely on rice for their daily food supply. “Cambodia, Laos and Thailand don’t have irrigation water to grow rice so around 70 percent of their rice fields simply rely on rainfall.”

In addition to identifying drought-resistant traits, the research will also complement other programs aiming to identify genes responsible for the resistance.

Professor Fischer said rice was the first major cereal with a fully sequenced genome. He said the next step in using the genetic information would be to understand the function of the fully sequenced genes. “Once the genes for drought tolerance are identified, researchers can use molecular tools to improve the efficiency of developing rice plants by identifying the particular genes that make certain plants more resistant,” he said.

Professor Fischer said the grant would help fund the use of biotechnology tools that match the responses of different rice varieties to their genetic makeup.

The money will also support a research fellow based at UQ. “The Rockefeller Foundation has supported an international program of rice biotechnology for more than 17 years,” he said.

“It has assisted with the training of in excess of 400 scientists and has invested more than $100 million.”

Professor Fischer said the UQ team had been conducting research over the past 10 years to understand the physiological basis of the response of rice to drought. He said they had begun looking at the varieties that performed better in dry conditions. “By using the new biotechnology tools we can identify the prime performers and locate the genes that make certain plants more drought resistant than others,” he said.

UQ has been awarded more than $1 million to assist research aimed at providing farmers in Cambodia, Laos and Thailand with drought-resistant rice varieties.

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VOLUNTEERS REQUIRED

Psychology research

Parents of children with an intellectual impairment, Autistic Spectrum Disorder/Asperger syndrome or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) are needed for a UQ Psychology Clinic research project evaluating strategies from a well-known parenting program and measuring the overall well-being and parenting style of participants.

Sessions will take place on Saturdays for four weeks from June at the St Lucia campus. Information: for children with an intellectual impairment telephone 07 3366 9696 or email jessicad@psy.uq.edu.au. For children with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder, telephone 07 3265 3876 or email s355650@student.uq.edu.au. For children with ADHD, telephone 07 3206 3074 or email reneeand@psy.uq.edu.au.

ADHD study

Fathers who have a child with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) are needed for a UQ study.

The study will look at the experiences of both mothers and fathers of children with ADHD and how they adjust to the stresses sometimes associated with parenting a child with the disorder.

Participants must be a biological parent and be willing to have a 40–60 minute individual open discussion about their experiences. A free workshop focusing on parenting a child with ADHD will be provided to participants after all the interviews have been completed.

Information: 07 3365 6858, j.lancaster@psy.uq.edu.au
After three years of construction, there was genuine excitement on May 21 when (from left) CSIRO Chief Executive Dr Geoff Garrett, Queensland Premier Peter Beattie, UQ Vice-Chancellor Professor John Hay and Federal Education, Science and Training Minister Dr Brendan Nelson gathered for the opening of the $105 million Queensland Bioscience Precinct. For a glimpse of the celebrations, see pages 12–14.
Australia’s largest research complex dedicated to human, animal and plant biology was launched at The University of Queensland last week.

The Queensland Bioscience Precinct houses UQ’s Institute for Molecular Bioscience (IMB) and CSIRO’s Livestock Industries, Plant Industry, Mathematical and Information Sciences and Sustainable Ecosystems divisions.

The $105-million complex at the University’s St Lucia campus was officially opened on May 21 by Federal Minister for Education, Science and Training Dr Brendan Nelson and Queensland Premier Peter Beattie.

“Biological technology in its many forms is one of the major growth areas for the future,” said UQ Vice-Chancellor Professor John Hay.

“The Queensland Bioscience Precinct will play an increasingly important role in providing the foundation for Queensland’s economic development and defining the future high technology industrial base of south-east Queensland.”

The precinct brings together 700 scientists in the largest facility of its kind in Australia.

It will foster diverse collaborative research and commercialisation over a wide range of bioscience areas, including gene discovery, livestock and plant industries and the development of sustainable ecosystems.

The seven-story construction was designed by Daryl Jackson Architects and covers 35,000 square metres on a 1.6-hectare site. It includes four buildings, dedicated conference facilities, hi-tech research laboratories and equipment including advanced nuclear magnetic resonance, X-ray crystallography, advanced microscopy and supercomputing facilities.

CSIRO Chief Executive Dr Geoff Garrett said his organisation looked forward to an exciting and fruitful alliance with UQ and other partners.

“Building and maintaining effective partnerships is critical if we are to succeed in making a difference. It is (continued on page 14)
Turning point in State’s history

'imperative that we have the best people with the best resources and facilities to achieve our goals,” he said.

The project was funded by CSIRO ($50 million), UQ ($15 million), the Queensland Government ($15 million), the Federal Government’s Federation Fund ($15 million) and The Atlantic Philanthropies ($10 million).

“The bioscience precinct is a first-class example of the way in which research collaboration between universities and publicly-funded research agencies will create new opportunities for spin-off businesses, jobs and growth,” said Dr Nelson.

Mr Beattie said his government’s support for the precinct was part of a Smart State initiative, in partnership with private enterprise and the academic sector, to ensure Queenslanders participated in the benefits of discoveries with commercial applications.

“Today is a turning point in this State’s history. We will no longer be regarded as only being involved in fundamentals,” he said.

The Queensland Government has also made a further commitment of $77.5 million over 10 years in operational funding for the IMB.

Nearly 300 people attended the opening, which also included speeches by UQ Chancellor Sir Llew Edwards, IMB Director Professor John Mattick and Construction Manager Peter Sampson from UQ Property and Facilities.

At a celebratory dinner held at Customs House after the opening, Associate Professor Bostjan Kobe from the IMB and School of Molecular and Microbial Sciences was presented with the 2001 Science Minister’s Prize for Achievement in the Life Sciences by Federal Minister for Science Peter McGauran.

www.uq.edu.au/bioscience

Aspects of the Queensland Bioscience Precinct. PHOTOS: courtesy Daryl Jackson Architects
Symphonic success

UQ students have performed a world-famous symphony at Queensland’s leading performance venue as part of a Brisbane classic music festival.

Franz Schubert’s *Unfinished Symphony* was the focal-point of a School of Music concert on May 25 at the Queensland Performing Arts Centre (QPAC).

The performance, during the 2003 4MBS Festival of Classics, was part of a joint partnership between QPAC and Brisbane’s classical music station 4MBS Classic FM.

UQ School of Music Head Professor Philip Bracanin said Schubert’s work had become even more popular with classical music lovers after it was featured in the Steven Spielberg film *Minority Report* starring Tom Cruise.

“Composed some 200 hundred years ago, Schubert’s *Unfinished Symphony* has not only continued to occupy a favoured place in the concert repertoire but has also proved its current relevance by playing a crucial musical role in the sci-fi blockbuster *Minority Report,*” he said.

The other major work performed was Joseph Haydn’s Mass in B Flat – *The Harmoniemesse*.

Director Gwyn Roberts conducted the UQ Symphony Orchestra during Schubert’s *Unfinished Symphony*.

The School of Music Chorale then joined the performance for Haydn’s *Harmoniemesse* under the baton of UQ’s Dr Richard Swann.

Professor Bracanin said Schubert’s status as one of the greatest composers in the history of music was confirmed by the way his music was able to transcend the barriers of time.

“The concentration, power and explosive emotional force of the music is constantly present; portraying intense human feelings, especially those traversing the abysses and heights of melancholy,” he said.

“While outstandingly complementing these emotional states, Schubert’s music nonetheless is entirely suited to the context of the 21st century technological environment of the *Minority Report.*”

It is believed Schubert’s *Unfinished Symphony* was not completed because he was unable to extend the beauty of the first two movements.

*The Harmoniemesse* was composed in 1802 and is the last of Haydn’s seven masses.

The concentration, power and explosive emotional force of the music is constantly present...

Mining agreement

UQ mining engineering students will have access to additional state-of-the-art laboratories under a new cooperative arrangement signed last month.

The Southbank Institute of TAFE will allow third and fourth-year students to use its process control laboratory.

The laboratory is widely recognised in the industry as one of the best facilities of its kind in Queensland, allowing students to further develop practical skills in control systems and measurement.

Economy study

A recent report authored by a UQ Business School PhD student and released in conjunction with the Committee for Economic Development of Australia has set Queensland as a benchmark for regional economic activity.

In the report, which presents a study of regional contribution to economic development, Stephen Jones said local communities should develop tighter linkages with neighbouring regions.

“Many local communities are too parochial and need to look beyond their boundaries to enhance the nation’s economic and export performance,” he said.

Community education

Everything from the breathtaking beauty of Northumbria to marriage workshops and food hygiene practices is on the agenda as part of UQ’s community education courses.

The Institute of Continuing and TESOL Education (ITCE) has been offering a variety of courses to the community since 1983.

There is a 20 percent reduction of fees for most courses to pensioners, full-time students and those receiving unemployment benefits.

Information: 07 3365 7100, www.icte.uq.edu.au
Global policy vital

A UQ researcher and international public health expert has claimed policy-making courage will determine whether major improvements are made in global health over the next decade.

UQ School of Population Health Head Professor Alan Lopez told health scientists attending the Fogarty International Centre Lecture in Maryland, US, last month that it was now possible to scientifically prioritise the importance of health issues such as heart disease and tobacco-related illness.

However, he said policy makers and politicians would need “vision and courage” to make important decisions in the face of strong influences, such as advocacy groups and public emotion.

Professor Lopez has been recognised internationally for his work in the area of tobacco health issues for the World Health Organisation (WHO).

It was his development of a new statistical accounting method – the Burden of Disease Analysis which measures health status – that established him as a major figure in international health policy.

“This analysis is a means of accurately assessing where health dollars are best spent and can lead to long-term benefits through a changing of health profiles,” he said.

“For example, heart disease accounts for seven million deaths worldwide while Ebola accounts for 50 to 500. Despite this, any mention of Ebola attracts a flood of attention and dollars.”

“In many countries, more people die of tobacco-related illnesses than from illicit drug use, but far more funding goes into fighting illicit drugs.

This type of emotional criteria influences health policy all over the world.”

Professor Lopez said he hoped to encourage debate on this issue by highlighting it in his lecture, delivered to some of the world’s leading health scientists at one of the most influential health research institutes in the world, the United States’ National Institute of Health.

To publicise your conference or seminar, call Joanne van Zeeland on 3365 2619 or email j.vanzeeland@uq.edu.au
A flesh-eating fly could pose a threat to Australian animals, according to a UQ Master of Veterinary Studies graduate.

Dr Saul Chemonges-Nielsen, a member of the Australian College of Veterinary Scientists who graduated from UQ in 1999, was the first person to research and record the risk posed to pet dogs in Hong Kong from the Old World Screwworm fly (*Chrysomya bezziana*).

He said the fly had recently been causing aggressive infestations in pet dogs in Hong Kong and could threaten Australian animals because Hong Kong was a source of pet migration and a major transit point to Australia.

"If the fly found its way to Australia the socio-economic price could be astronomical due to the death of animals, decreased production, a ban on animal exports and depletion of wildlife," he said.

Dr Chemonges-Nielsen’s research into the fly was published in the April edition of the *Australian Veterinary Journal*.

The fly is a parasite of all warm-blooded animals and is one of the most serious pests of livestock in the Americas.

It lays eggs close to skin wounds that hatch, allowing larvae to penetrate the flesh and feed on living tissue. If untreated this can lead to infection and eventually death.

Although Australia is free from the fly, Dr Chemonges-Nielsen said international trade and pet migration from endemic areas had heightened the risk of Screwworm fly importation.

"The unauthorised arrival of ships and people to Australian shores poses the greatest risk of introducing this disease and other exotic diseases into Australia," he said.
Students interested in studying overseas as part of their UQ degree now have an additional reason to consider the option.

Three UQ faculties have received almost $100,000 in the latest University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP) Scholarship Program grants.

“This is an outstanding result for the University and highlights the increasing importance being placed on overseas education experiences for domestic students,” said Deputy Vice-Chancellor (International and Development) Professor Trevor Grigg.

UQ’s International Education Directorate (IED) Exchange Student Advisor Jan McCreary said the UMAP funds would enable 21 students from the faculties of Arts, Business, Economics and Law, and Social and Behavioural Sciences, to study at universities in Mexico, Hong Kong, Korea and Japan in Semester Two this year and Semester One next year.

“Student exchanges are a fantastic opportunity for students. Not only can it broaden the scope of their degree by completing courses only offered at the host institution, but the experience gives students a different perspective on their field of study and can help them discover new career and academic opportunities,” Ms McCreary said.

Ms McCreary said the University’s student exchange program (UQ Abroad) had agreements with more than 100 institutions in nearly 25 countries.

Fourth-year arts/social science student Kate Morioka, who was in Japan in 2001–2002, said her exchange program to Japan “offered me the opportunity to throw myself into new challenges and discover what was out there for me.”

Ms McCreary said many students also organised internships in their host country before or after completing either one or two semester’s full-time coursework.

Study options grow

Fourth-year psychological science student Rachel McDonald during her exchange in Canada.

PHOTO: courtesy IED

www.uq.edu.au/uqabroad
UQ's Antiquities Museum has recently been relocated to a spacious and aesthetically-pleasing new home on the third floor of the University's Michie Building.

Art history lecturer Dr Kerry Heckenberg from UQ's School of History, Philosophy, Religion and Classics said the museum would remain a physically and intellectually integral part of UQ's classics and ancient history curriculum.

The museum's first vase was purchased from Sotheby's auction house in London and is decorated with a late Archaic red-figure scene. "Now reconstructed, the vase is one of the centre pieces of the collection and is popular with many students," Dr Heckenberg said.

"The Greek god Dionysus is pictured on the main side of the vase and seemingly offers a kantharos or wine cup to the draped youth on the reverse."

Under the directorship of Dr Sonia Puttock, the museum's new home provides a spacious window into antiquity through a variety of historical objects used by ancient civilizations in the Near East, Greece, Etruria and the Roman Empire.

These range from a classically beautiful stone head of Aphrodite dating from the second century AD to an intimidating metal warrior's helmet made in the third century BC by southern Italy's Greek colonists.

Dr Heckenberg said the museum had built up its collection with the help of donations from people associated with the school and generous benefactors.

“A group called the Friends of Antiquity has been particularly supportive, along with the UQ Alumni Association and the Classics Students' Society," Dr Heckenberg said.

She said many courses used the museum and students were encouraged to research particular items.

"It is of fundamental importance to the school and its work and has stimulated many in their quest to understand and interpret the past," she said.

The museum is open to the public from 9am–5pm Monday to Friday.

CDs of the collection are available.

Cajal Club award
Dr Guy Elston from UQ's Vision, Touch and Hearing Research Centre has been awarded the prestigious 2003 Krieg Cortical Explorer Award of the Cajal Club.

He received US$3000 and a trip to a San Diego club meeting.

The prize is awarded to an outstanding neuroscientist investigating the cerebral cortex and/or its connections.

Weather station
Staff and students can now log on to UQ’s new online weather website (www.geosp.uq.edu.au/uqweather) before heading to UQ St Lucia.

The School of Geography, Planning and Architecture's Dr Hamish McGowan came up with the idea of installing the solar-powered station, located on top of the Social Sciences Building.

Accreditation success
UQ is the first Australian university to gain accreditation by National Certification Services Inter-national (NCSI) in the areas of quality, safety and environmental management.

The quality and safety areas were conducted on the Property and Facilities division whereas the environmental certification covered the St Lucia campus.

UQ Ipswich oration
UQ graduate Air Commodore Julie Hammer, Commandant of the Australian Defence Force Academy and Australia's highest-ranking female officer, will examine tertiary education and Australia's defence force at the annual UQ Ipswich Oration on June 2.

Tickets cost $22 and include wine and cheese.

Information: 07 3381 1011

Dr Heckenberg in the Antiquities Museum.

Fresh start for antiquities

It began in 1963 with the purchase of a Greek painted vase, an amphora dating from around 480 BC. By 1975 it held around 200 pieces and now includes more than 1000 complete objects and many fragments.

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As the doors opened on the 13th biennial Alumni Book Fair there was a rush to get inside the UQ Centre as the crowd searched for literary treasures, according to book fair convenor Feona Walker.

Ms Walker said with the help of the rare book auction on April 24, The Alumni Association of The University of Queensland Inc raised about $110,000 for University initiatives such as postgraduate and sporting scholarships and assistance for students with disabilities.

She said the number of people who attended the fair between April 25 and 29 was astonishing with the queue averaging one hundred metres.

“The opening day was great – we had the same rush to get in as always. When we opened the doors everyone ran in,” Ms Walker said.

“The queue went from the UQ Centre all the way back to the swimming pool. We were very pleased.”

It was the first time the event had been held in the UQ Centre and Ms Walker said it had been a great success.

“Despite the huge turnout on the opening day, the hall wasn’t as cramped as in previous years because the UQ Centre gave us that little bit more room,” she said.

Ms Walker said she had received positive feedback from both the public and volunteers.

“We are now having a well deserved rest before we begin collecting for 2005,” she said.

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New look at ancient foods

A new translation and detailed commentary of the Ancient Greek doctor Galen’s second century treatise On the Properties of Foodstuffs was published this month.

Dr Owen Powell, an Honorary Research Fellow with UQ’s School of History, Philosophy, Religion and Classics, has provided what he believes to be the first translation that is accompanied by an extensive commentary discussing Galen’s terminology and the background to his views.

Dr Powell said the text covered everything from wine to cannabis.

“He described what different foods do to the body and what the body does to different foods,” he said.

“He was far and away the most prolific medical author of antiquity.”

Galen’s ideas are illuminated in the text by Dr Powell’s specialist knowledge as a former physician with experience in gastroenterology.

The book, which Dr Powell worked on for around five years, is published by Cambridge University Press and contains an introduction by Professor John Wilkins, a Reader in Greek literature at the University of Exeter, United Kingdom.

Dr Powell said Galen looked for the obvious when researching and experimenting – he looked at the effect of foods on the bowels.

“He was an experimental physiologist and wanted to see what happened to food as it travelled down the alimentary tract,” he said.

“He would feed a pig a particular food and then cut open its stomach while it was still alive to see what had happened to the food.”

The text covers a wide range of foods, both common and exotic. There is greater emphasis on foodstuffs such as cereals, legumes, dairy products and grapes, which indicate their importance at the time.

However, Dr Powell said Galen’s ideas continued to be relevant long after his death in AD 216.

“His ideas were still being taught as late as the 17th century,” he said.

“In fact as recently as 30 years ago in any pharmacy you would have been able to find a range of so-called Galenicals – the building blocks of many medicines.

“Some were not all that different in their purpose from what had been described by Galen almost two millennia ago.”

A photograph of an original second century plate used for holding the foodstuffs that Galen comments on adorns the front cover of Dr Powell’s book.

The plate is housed in the University’s Antiquities Museum.
Senior appointments at UQ

PROFESSOR MICHAEL KENIGER

Professor Keniger has been appointed Executive Dean of UQ’s Faculty of Engineering, Physical Sciences and Architecture. He was appointed to the role in March after acting in the position since the end of last year.

“I look forward to helping secure and shape the Faculty’s future and capitalising on the rich interactions that are possible across its defined and emerging areas of strength,” he said.

Professor Keniger was Head of UQ’s School of Geography, Planning and Architecture (2000–2002) and Department of Architecture (1990–2000).

In 1999 he was appointed as Government Architect to advise the Queensland Government on key built environment, urban design and heritage issues.

Prior to this, he helped guide the redesign of South Bank Parklands and the Queen Street Mall and in 1998 was awarded the Queensland Board of Architects’ silver medal for Architect of the Year.

He was a member of the Design Review panel of the Olympic Coordination Authority from 1996–2001 and has contributed to a number of other projects including the National Museum, Queensland Gallery of Modern Art and the Queensland State Library Millennium Library Project.

PROFESSOR JEFF GORMAN AND PROFESSOR ROB CAPON

Two internationally-recognised scientists have joined UQ’s Institute for Molecular Biology (IMB) in the new Queensland Bioscience Precinct.

Professors Gorman and Capon will further their research into Australia’s biodiversity and establish a world-class proteomics facility at the IMB.

“Professor Capon is setting up the Centre for Molecular Biodiversity which will become a centre of excellence for research into natural bio-actives and chemical genomics,” said IMB Director Professor John Mattick.

Professor Gorman’s joint appointment with CSIRO will see him establish a core proteomics facility in partnership with CSIRO.

“Professor Gorman’s research will assist in developing therapeutics to combat viral infections and other important medical conditions, while his experience in establishing state-of-the-art protein analytical laboratories makes him a unique candidate,” Professor Mattick said.

Prior to joining the IMB, Professor Capon was a Professor of chemistry at the University of Melbourne where he led the Marine and Natural Products Research Group. Professor Gorman was a senior principal research scientist with CSIRO and the Biomolecular Research Institute in Victoria.

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR JANELLE ALLISON

Dr Allison joined UQ Gatton last month as Director of the Centre for Rural and Regional Innovation – Queensland. The Centre is a joint venture between UQ and the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and will incorporate the work of the existing Rural Extension Centre at UQ Gatton.

Previously at Queensland University of Technology, Dr Allison held positions as Associate Professor, Assistant Dean (teaching and learning), School of Planning, Landscape Architecture and Surveying Head and School of Design and Built Environment Head.

She also held the Selby-Hancock Chair in Sustainable Development and has a strong practical background in local economic development and regional planning.

ANIMAL STUDIES

National and local print media, including The Australian, The Advertiser, The Courier-Mail, The West Australian and Queensland Country Life, reported on a new animal physiotherapy course as part of UQ’s Master of Animal Studies.

HEALTH

Dr Maureen Burke from Student Support Services was featured in Womans’ Day talking about her cat Buddy’s self-help audiotapes – Buddy targets cancer and Buddy targets feeling good about yourself.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Proposed changes to the country’s higher education system in the Federal Government’s Budget announced this month received widespread coverage across the nation in newspapers and on television and radio broadcasts.


Secretary and Registrar Douglas Porter was quoted in The Australian and Campus Review about UQ’s successful implementation of PeopleSoft software.

HYSHOT

An extensive search in the South Australian desert for a missing scramjet payload from the successful HyShot II experiment was reported nationally, including in The Courier-Mail, The Age, and The Advertiser. The search was led by the Centre for Hypersonics’ Professor Allan Paull.

INTERNET

Dr Gerard Goggin from UQ’s Centre for Critical and Cultural Studies was interviewed by several media outlets including The Australian, South-West News, ABC Radio National and Canberra ABC radio, on his book about how people with disabilities are being left out of the digital communications revolution.

IRAQ

UQ experts were quoted about various aspects of the war in Iraq. They included: Professor Martin Stuart-Fox and Dr Roxanne Marcotte (School of History, Philosophy, Religion and Classics); Dr John Harrison (School of Journalism and Communication); Anthony Cassimatis (School of Law); and Dr Sonia Puttock (Antiquities Museum).

QUEENSLAND BIOSCIENCE PRECINCT

The official opening on May 21 of Australia’s biggest bioscience precinct at UQ’s St Lucia campus attended by Federal Minister for Education, Science and Training Dr Brendan Nelson and Queensland Premier Peter Beattie was reported nationally on television, radio and the Internet and in newspapers.

RESEARCH FUNDING

A $1 million Rockefeller Foundation grant for research into drought-resistant rice varieties was reported in The Courier-Mail, Sunshine Coast Daily, The Advertiser, Daily Telegraph, Herald Sun and radio stations nationally. The research is being undertaken by the School of Land and Food Sciences’ Professor Shu Fukai and Adjunct Professor Ken Fischer.

SARS

A number of UQ staff were mentioned in relation to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). They included:
Concerts, special lectures and seminars, UQ events of general interest and details about visiting academics and dignitaries is published in this section. Entries, including date, time, school/section, contact name and telephone number, should be emailed to j.vanzeeland@uq.edu.au

SEMINARS
- Tuesday, May 27
  The Physics Museum, Sesimometers and Seismographs, Col Lynam (6pm, Room 222, Parnell Bldg.)
- Thursday, May 29
  School of History, Philosophy, Religion and Classics, The 'first Europeans': Nationalist imagination, diaspora and emotional historiography, Dr Zlatko Skrbis (4pm, Library Conference Room, Level 1, Duhig Bldg).
- Thursday, June 5
  School of Land and Food Sciences, Sustainable management of Queensland’s grazing lands: A selective look at issues, risks and opportunities, Dr Michael Quirk, Queensland Department of Primary Industries (noon, Room 323, Hartley Teakle Bldg).
- School of Life Sciences, Comparative genomics: Uncovering genes involved in the pathogenicity of a wolbachia strain, Markus Riegler (1pm, Room 139, Goodard Bldg).
- School of History, Philosophy, Religion and Classics, Authenticity and self-disclosure: Hedegger’s transformation of subjectivity, Simon Lumsden, University of Sydney (3pm, Seminar Room 348, Forgan Smith Bldg).
- School of Biomedical Sciences, Glycine receptors and startling disease, Associate Professor Joe Lynch (1pm, Room 305, Skerriman Bldg).
- School of Political Science and International Studies, The USA and east-Asian regionalism, Dr Paul Bowles, University of Northern British Columbia (3pm, Room 537, General Purpose North 3 Bldg).
- Tuesday, June 3
  Bright Minds, Frontiers in Science, Dr Ben Hankamer and Professor John Drennan (4.30pm, IMB auditorium, Queensland Bioscience Precinct). To RSVP, contact 07 3365 9798.
- Wednesday, June 4
  UQ SPORT, Gold Coast preparation – the critical month, Krishina Stanton and Pat Clohessy (6.30pm, UQ Athletics Centre, Sir William McGregor Drive) For details, telephone 07 3365 6055.
- Australasian Centre on Ageing, Memory and ageing: Challenges, changes and opportunities, Associate Professor Janet Wiles, Dr Jill White (7.30am, Royal on the Park, Cur Alice and Albert Sts, Brisbane). For bookings contact 07 3346 9064, email aca@uq.edu.au or visit www.uq.edu.au/aca
- Thursday, June 5
  Centre for Critical and Cultural Studies, Hate speech on the Internet in Japan: The Burakumin experience, Associate Professor Nanette Gottlieb (5.30pm, UQ Centre lobby).
- Friday, June 6
  School of Land and Food Sciences, Molecular ecology: Revisiting the rumen, Dr Athol Klieve, Queensland Department of Primary Industries (noon, Room 323, Hartley Teakle Bldg).
- School of History, Philosophy, Religion and Classics, How to be an Empiricist, Octavio Beano, University of South Carolina (3pm, Seminar Room 334, Forgan Smith Bldg).
- School of Life Sciences, Genetic diversity in redclaw crayfish (Cherax quadricarinatus): Exploitable variation for stock improvement? Dr Peter Mather, Queensland University of Technology (1pm, Room 139, Goodard Bldg).
- UQ Business School, The interactive effects of in-store radio advertising, price discounts and newspaper circular advertising on sales of consumable and durable products, Professor Charles Areni, University of Sydney (10.30am, Room 106, Colin Clark Bldg).
- Friday, June 13
  School of Political Science and International Studies, Growth fetishism and the politics of happiness, Dr Clive Hamilton, The Australian Institute (3pm, Room 537, General Purpose North 3 Bldg).
- School of History, Philosophy, Religion and Classics, Foucault, feminism and the question of autonomy, Dr Aurelia Armstrong (4pm, Seminar Room 346, Forgan Smith Bldg).
- UQ Business School, Simultaneous estimations of the cost of equity and the value of franked dividends using a modified residual income valuation model, Dr Julien Yeo, University of Melbourne (10.30am, Room 114, Colin Clark Bldg).
- Thursday, June 19–Friday, June 20
  Mater Children’s Hospital and AO Spine Centre, Backs to the future conference (Mater Children’s Hospital, Raymond Terrace, South Brisbane). For details, telephone 07 3834 7025.
- Friday, June 20
  UQ Business School, Seasonal adjustment – new perspectives on an old problem, Dr Richard Lane (10.30am, Room 106, Colin Clark Bldg).
- Tuesday, June 24
  The Physics Museum, Early radio broadcasting technology, Peter Hadgraft and Rex Newsome (6pm, Room 222, Parnell Bldg).
- Wednesday, July 2
  UQ SPORT, The Brisbane challenge – the bridge to Brisbane challenge, Krishina Stanton and Pat Clohessy (6.30pm, UQ Athletics Centre, Sir William McGregor Drive) For details, telephone 07 3365 6055.
- Thursday, July 3
  School of Music, Masters Recital – Brett Holland (Bass) (11.30am, The Long Room, Customs House, 399 Queen St).
- School of Music, AMBS Festival Finale Opus 3 (Concert Hall, QPAC Performing Arts Centre). Tickets at door.
- Thursday, May 29
  School of Music, David Irving (baroque violin), Huguette Brassine (harpischord) and Belinda Mamvaring (violoncello) (12.30pm, Nickson Room, Zelman Cowen Bldg).
- Friday, May 30
  School of Music, Dinner concert – cabaret spectacular featuring Strictly Swing (7pm, The Long Room, Customs House, 399 Queen St). For details, telephone 07 3365 8999.
- Saturday, June 7
  Victoria officium defunctorum (1603) (8pm, St Stephen’s Cathedral, Brisbane).

TELEVISION
Dr Toni Johnson-Woods (Contemporary Studies Program) as well as Dr Alan McKee and Dr Frances Bonner (School of English, Media Studies and Art History) were interviewed by The Courier-Mail about Channel Ten’s television show Big Brother. Dr Johnson-Woods was also quoted separately in The Sunday Age and The Courier-Mail.

Classifieds

WANTED TO RENT/HOUSE-SIT
- Visiting academic and family seek unit/house from Jul–Dec. Pref 3 brm close to UQ St Lucia. Martin: martin.williams@eng.ox.ac.uk
- Visiting academic needs rental/house sitting opportunity Jul–Oct. Paullette: paullette@cate-mail.de
- Visiting academic needs rental near UQ St Lucia, Jul–Dec. Furn 2 bdrms, up to $320/wk. Carol: carol@dcs.gla. ac.uk

Prizes
- The Norman McCann Summer Scholarship: for students who will have completed a bachelor degree by the end of 2003 and who have commenced or plan to commence postgraduate study in the field of Australian history and literature. Closing: June 13. Information: gburns@nla.gov.au
- The Thomas Morrow Prize: for an undergraduate who, as part of a course, writes the best essay on Australian exploration and history. Worth: $360. Closing: November 22. Information: 07 3365 1984
- The Eleanor Mary Hinder Bur- sary: for a female graduate and financial member of the Australian Federation of University Women to undertake research in South-East Asia. Worth: $4000. Closing: July 31. Information: www.aufw.org.au

Library Hours for 2003
Information on library hours is available on the Library’s homepage www.cybrary.uq.edu.au or telephone (07) 3365 6703.
As part of her PhD research, former student Bronwin Stapleton from UQ’s School of Molecular and Microbial Sciences collected sponges and slugs from the ocean and extracted chemical compounds from them.

As well as advancing understanding of the marine environment her research could lead to the development of new non-toxic antifouling technologies.

Damage caused by barnacles and marine organisms such as sea squirts is estimated to cost marine industries around $3.5 billion a year.

Dr Stapleton said she tested many of the compounds on the larvae of sea squirts to determine the potential of the compounds to hinder the growth of such organisms.

“Our research gives clues as to how this kind of defence may be used in nature,” she said.

The research also involved a sea slug feeding study correlating various sea slugs with sponges they had eaten.

“Isolating the compounds was significant in itself because each new structure we find sheds light on the chemical defence mechanisms of the creatures producing the chemicals.

The highly populated environment of a coral reef has many competitive pressures for space, light and nutrients and therefore the survival of marine organisms depends on their ability to defend themselves from predators and competitors,” she said.

Since sponges lack the behavioural defences of mobile animals it’s believed the toxic chemicals they produce may act as a kind of chemical warfare to their rivals.

“Our research gives clues as to how this kind of defence may be used in nature.”

Dr Stapleton travelled regularly from the St Lucia campus to UQ’s Heron Island Research Station where she collected Acanthella, Axynissa and Dysidea marine sponges and Phyllidia sea slugs before returning to extract the chemical compounds.

This was done using a solvent that gave crude mixtures of different substances that were separated using a technique called chromatography until pure compounds were obtained.

“Since sponges lack the biochemical defences of mobile animals it’s believed the toxic chemicals they produce may act as a kind of chemical warfare to their rivals.”

“Isolating the compounds was significant in itself because each new structure we find sheds light on the chemical pathways the organism uses to make compounds,” she said.

“This biosynthesis information contributes to our general understanding of how living things work.”

She said some of the compounds found were novel, meaning it was the first time they were found in nature.

“Chemicals from natural sources such as the ones isolated during this research also have the potential to lead to new treatments for diseases such as cancer and malaria,” she said.

Dr Stapleton has since begun similar investigations into terrestrial as well as marine organisms and is currently pursuing a research position in a related field overseas.

The research also involved a sea slug feeding study correlating various sea slugs with sponges they had eaten.

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