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NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE

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The University of Adelaide has appointed Australia's first Professor of Creative Writing.

The postgraduate Chair in Creative Writing, co-funded by the University and the South Australian Government, is a new position aimed at fostering excellence in South Australian literature and encouraging new writers.

Melbourne writer Dr Tom Shapcott, who has published eight novels and 13 books of poetry, has been appointed to the position.

Dr Shapcott was director of the Australia Council's Literature Board for eight years, has served on the executive committee of the Australian Society of Authors, and for the last four years has been director of the National Book Council of Australia. In 1989 he was awarded the Struga Golden Wreath Award, an international poetry prize given to only two English-language poets.

Announcing his appointment,

the Minister for the Arts, Ms Diana Laidlaw, said, "This is an exciting initiative for the Government and the University of Adelaide, and Dr Shapcott's acceptance of the position is certainly a coup for South Australia."

There has been strong demand for the Department of English's postgraduate courses in Creative Writing — including a Master of Arts degree, Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma — since they were announced last year.

As well as coordinating postgraduate students in creative writing, Dr Shapcott will be building strong links between the University and various literary elements within South Australia, including Wakefield Press and the SA Writers' Centre, and with film and theatre.

The head of the University's English Department, Dr Susan Hosking, said the Chair in Creative Writing was important for both the University of Adelaide

and the South Australian arts industry.

"Unfortunately, many South Australian writers who become successful tend to move interstate or overseas," Dr Hosking said.

"But the new Chair in Creative Writing hopes to change that, by creating a training and research structure for writers in South Australia and encouraging them to remain in this State."

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Mary O'Kane, welcomed Dr Shapcott to the University of Adelaide.

"I'm thrilled about his appointment, which means this University can help build on South Australia's outstanding history of fine writers and literature," she said.

Dr Shapcott takes up his position as Professor of Creative Writing on Monday, 31 March.

—David Ellis



The people of ancient Scotland may have been more interested in aligning their Stonehenge-type structures with the sun or moon than many scientists have previously believed. That's according to new research by University of Adelaide Masters student Ms Gail Higginbottom, which brings Classics and Physics together in a unique fusion of disciplines. Story on page 4. Photo courtesy of Dr Clive Ruggles, University of Leicester.

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Megaliths inspire fusion of disciplines, p.4

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A (female) Vice-Chancellor changes her mind — again!

One of the most productive meetings of my week is on Wednesday mornings when the Heads of Division, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Registrar,



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Extra childcare facility opened

Childcare facilities at the University's North Terrace campus have grown by 23 places following the official opening of refurbished space in the Johnson Building by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Mary O'Kane, on 25 February.

The Johnson Building facilities are part of the Observatory Child Care Centre, one of three centres operated by the University. A separately incorporated association, University of Adelaide Child Care Services Inc, currently manages the North Terrace and Waite centres, with Roseworthy soon to join them.

The Vice-Chancellor paid tribute to the Director of the Observatory Childcare Centre, Ms Robyn Moore and her staff — particularly for their success in achieving accreditation for the Johnson facilities at the highest possible standard of care provision.

Professor O'Kane said that with recent changes to HECS bringing additional disincentives for women to undertake tertiary study, the provision of adequate workplace childcare for students and staff was of the "utmost importance". The new facilities emphasised the University's firm policy commitment in this area, she said.

The News
IN BRIEF

A new technique to objectively measure sensations experienced by patients in certain internal organs, promises to yield important insights into medical problems such as diabetes and eating disorders.

Professor Andreas Smout, a Senior Visiting Research Fellow from University Hospital, Utrecht, is introducing the technique to researchers in the University's Department of Medicine and the Gastroenterology Unit at the RAH.

The technique — cerebral evoked potential recording — involves the stimulation of sensations in the oesophagus.

To stimulate the oesophagus volunteers are asked to swallow a small balloon, which is inflated rapidly and repeatedly inside the oesophagus. Electrodes attached to the patient's head then record the electrical voltage generated by the brain. In general, the greater the voltage the greater the sensation being experienced by the subject.

The technique is potentially useful in examining why some people experience oesophageal pain beyond normal levels.

During his six-week stay, Professor Smout will also attempt to use the technique to test sensations in the stomach and small intestine — something that has never before been achieved.

If successful the technique could be useful in research into appetite disorders, particularly the question of why some obese people still feel hungry despite having just eaten a large meal.

"The aim is to learn more about how sensory information is relayed from the internal organs to the brain," Professor Smout said.

Some diabetics complain of severe oesophageal pain caused by reflux, while others appear to have less pain than they should. Professor Smout's

experiments will determine whether increased blood sugar levels affect the perceptions of oesophageal pain.

Subjects will be injected with glucose to simulate diabetes, and then they will be tested using the balloon and electrodes. The test will be repeated without the glucose injection.

The technique has the potential to aid studies into other medical problems such as Irritable Bowel Syndrome, in which sufferers endure pain throughout their gastro-intestinal tract.

Sufferers of Non-cardiac Chest Pain complain of heart attack-like symptoms — severe chest pain radiating down the arms. After one or two attacks of this

Adelaide input to Lao centre

The head of the Department of Women's Studies, Dr Margaret Allen, has been commissioned to write a feasibility study on the establishment of Women's Studies in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the new National University of Laos in Vientiane.

The commission, from the Swedish International Development Agency and the Lao Ministry of Education, is a direct consequence of a visit to Adelaide last year by the Lao Vice Minister for Education, Mrs Bounpheng Mounphasay.

Mrs Mounphasay led a delegation to the 6th International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women — hosted by the University of Adelaide — and met Dr Allen and staff from Women's Studies as well as the then Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), Professor Mary O'Kane.

Dr Allen spent most of January in Vientiane on her first visit to Laos, meeting University staff, government officials, non-government organisations and private researchers.

Her report, due at the end of this month, will recommend for the establishment of Women's Studies in the new University, with a major focus on education, health, and the effect on women of Lao development from a command economy towards a market one.

"Women in many Asian and African countries see Women's Studies as crucial to the development process," Dr Allen said.

Advertisement

"The female literacy rate in Laos is 35% and the numbers of girls decreases at every level of school. There is a great deal of concern about gender issues and the need to see that women are not left out of the development process nor adversely affected by economic change.

"It's very important that the centre should concentrate on the issues which are of real relevance to Lao women."

The new National University of Laos came into being in 1996. It is a multi-campus institution which brings together, under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, ten pre-existing post-secondary institutions which had been administered by a variety of ministries.

Its establishment is part of a concerted emphasis on education and the

development of human resources in Laos which has accompanied the country's move to a mixed economy and its progressive integration into regional and international affairs.

"Laos is officially a Francophone country, but now there is a great emphasis upon the study of English," Dr Allen said.

"Government officials are being given time off work to attend English language classes, and English text books are on sale everywhere in Vientiane."

The commission is managed by Luminis Pty Ltd and assisted by Dr Lesley Potter from Geography, who has worked in Laos on a number of occasions.

—John Edge



Dr Margaret Allen (centre) is pictured with members of the Women's Education Taskforce of the Lao Ministry of Education in Vientiane in January. On her right is the Head of the Taskforce, Mrs Khanthaly Siliphongphanh.

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"There are also those whose experiences with nursing home care have been a relief and a comfort to the family," he said.

The following is just one example of the wide range of feelings and situations experienced by relatives, which are presented in the study's first report, "Relatives' Experience of Nursing Home Entry: Meanings, Practice and Discourse":

"BERYL"

Beryl was initially relieved when her mother, who suffered a stroke, was placed in the hospital's rehabilitation unit. She was under the impression her mother would stay there, but was shocked to find out that was not true. By the time she was informed of this, her mother had only 10 days left in the unit. Beryl phoned dozens of nursing homes looking for an empty bed. None were available, but the staff all said they would call back when one was free. Within 18 months she hadn't received a single phone call from any of those homes. Beryl's mother was placed in the new wing of a nursing home, where the staff refused to listen to her mother's health history. Although Beryl tried to give them detailed information about two hip replacements her mother had

had, she was ignored and her mother sent to a hospital for x-rays, where she waited three-quarters of a day without food. Beryl also had grave concerns about the medication her mother was given at the nursing home, as though the home was simply "bombing her out". The doctor also rarely visited her mother. Although she appreciated the nursing staff's sense of humour, Beryl felt powerless about the state of her mother's care.

Professor Pearson said the aim of the study, which concludes in 1999, was to provide detailed information about nursing home entry experiences, which

N Notations

Lunch hour delights

The long holiday concert drought is over for lovers of lunch hour music with the start of the Elder Conservatorium's 1997 Lunch Hour Concert series on Friday 7 March.

Highlights of the first semester series include the University Waits and dancers from Meryl Tankard Dance Theatre presenting songs and dances of the 12th and 13th centuries, the chamber music ensemble Opus 8 performing Schubert's "Trout" Quintet, the Piano Mania team of Max Cooke, Robert Chamberlain and Darryl Coote with works for one piano (two, four and six hands), two pianos and three pianos, and visiting artists from Japan in a concert of Japanese music using traditional Japanese instruments — all this plus the very best of the Elder Conservatorium's own staff and students.

• For a full program concert the Concert Manager, Anne-Marie Peard on 8303 5925.

ASQ season

The Australian String Quartet (ASQ) will present a season of four concerts in 1997, showcasing some of the most beautiful works from the string quartet genre.

The season includes quartets by Brahms and Schubert, whose anniversary year it is, as well as work by Mozart, Beethoven, Shostakovich, Haydn and Malcolm Williamson.

The ASQ will be led in 1997 by London-born Peter Tanfield, who joined the group this year to replace William Hennessy. Janis Laurs, who left the Quartet last year, has rejoined it for the January-July period while the search for a new cellist is finalised.

Other activities for 1997 include a March tour to Europe, concert appearances for Musica Viva and the Brisbane Biennial, a joint season with Leigh Warren and Dancers, and a concert in Opera in the Outback.

• Details of the 1997 season are available from BASS or the ASQ Administrator, Peta Montgomery on 8303 3748.

Brahms Centenary

The Elder Conservatorium's acclaimed soloist Gil Sullivan features in a series of five concerts devoted to the piano music of Johannes Brahms in the centenary year of the composer's death.

The series began on 3 March and concludes on 27 October, with all concerts in Elder Hall. The second concert on 19 April focuses on Brahms' chamber music and includes violinist Jane Peters, violist Paul Wright and Danish cellist Georg Pedersen. Gil Sullivan will also play a two-piano concert on 28 July with his Conservatorium colleague, Stefan Ammer.

• Tickets available from BASS.

Q: *There have been many internal reviews of management at the University, as well as many changes in the higher education environment over the past decade. Are universities suffering from change fatigue and how do you introduce reforms that don't contribute to that?*

A: The external changes have been big and they will continue. There's no way that the University itself can control those: it must adjust, it must adapt to function effectively as a University, come what may.

Society has been changing for hundreds of years. It's not new. But the process of change externally is more rapid. Any institution which is preparing young people for careers in a changing world has to be committed to change. Research is all about new knowledge and change.

So there will always be a need to adjust to change in the University and we have to be quite sure that the processes for decision-making are of a kind that can respond appropriately.

The other part of it of course has been the internal changes. The Corbett review on one hand, and the Karmel review on the other, pushed the pendulum to one extreme and then to another extreme. That has been in itself a problem for the University.

We have to find a more sensible course which is somewhere between those extremes so that the academic community in particular feel that they really are part of the University's decision-making, that the University is being managed for academic purposes.

That's not to say that the general staff don't have an important role in this — of course they do — in supporting those academic purposes. There needs to be an effective partnership between the general and academic staff. But we do need to have a process of management in which the staff of the University feel they are participating so they can take pride in the institution and feel that it is going in the right direction.

Q: *A management restructure came into force here at the beginning of last year. To what degree do your recommendations pick up the significant changes the Federal Government has made since then?*

A: The recommendations that I'm coming forward with — establishing the six faculties and giving a much more explicit role to the Academic Board — are building on what's been there in the past. They're not undoing things to any substantial extent, but they will mean that the Council will be in receipt of much better advice.

In respect of the changed external environment, the University has to be able to move with rather faster footwork than hitherto and it has to do that with consultation so people understand why things are changing, so that they are then in a position to support the changes.

I think there will be much greater capacity for consultation, particularly

through the use of the Academic Board in the decision-making processes to a much greater extent. That will mean that when the University is making changes it will be able to move with a greater degree of confidence than might otherwise have been the case when there was suspicion that Senior Management Group was just doing things to the university rather than leading collective decision-making.

Q: *Strengthening the Academic Board's role seems to involve a new focus on the core activities of the University. Have Australian universities been ignoring their core activities in favour of second-guessing the future?*

A: I don't think it would be fair to say they are neglecting their core activities. The problem has been that with 36 or 37 publicly-funded universities all wanting to represent themselves as having exactly the same role, there has been a neglect of certain important areas of specialisation in technical and applied areas, and a great preoccupation with every university offering PhD programs and MBA programs and so on. It's that uniformity that has been the negative feature of the Dawkins reforms and their consequences.

The new era will offer far better opportunities for universities to define really what they are about and to do those things well, and for different universities to have different missions to a significant extent. I think that's going to be a very positive development.

Q: *Is competition the driving force in moving the University towards a more academic focus?*

What is the nature of consciousness? What is the relationship of mind to the world? Big questions, which have engaged philosophers east and west for millennia.

On Saturday, 15 March, the University Council Room will be the venue for an unusual dialogue between western and Tibetan Buddhist philosophers of mind on these very questions.

The half-day workshop sponsored by the Philosophy Department — entitled 'Mind and World: Cognitive Science & Buddhist Philosophy' — will feature two Tibetan lamas and a western scholar whose expertise bridges both cognitive science and Tibetan Buddhist philosophy of mind.

While conferences like this have been held in other parts of the world (notably with the Dalai Lama at Harvard University and in Dhara-

msala, India), it appears that this may be the first time it has been done in Australia.

"The strong core of philosophers of mind at the University of Adelaide and Flinders University, and access to highly qualified Tibetan scholars through local Buddhist centres, makes it possible to attempt such an experiment here," said Dr Gerard O'Brien, Lecturer in Philosophy who is co-organising the event.

The former abbot (Vice Chancellor) of Gyuto Tantric University in northern India, Khensur Lobsang Tenzin Rinpoche, has been brought from India specifically for the workshop by Gyuto House, a Buddhist-oriented centre for cultural arts and philosophical exchange in the Adelaide Hills.

He will be joined by Khensur Lobsang Thubten Rinpoche, the former

abbot of Sera Je Monastic University in southern India, a senior scholar in the Tibetan monastic community who is on an extended teaching visit to Buddha House in Fullarton.

Professor Jay Garfield, a US scholar with an international reputation in both cognitive science and Tibetan Buddhist philosophy of mind who now heads the Philosophy Department at the University of Tasmania, will provide the context for the dialogue in opening remarks and serve as chair.

Nine philosophers from Adelaide and Flinders Universities have agreed to participate in the dialogue.

The Vice Chancellor, Professor Mary O'Kane, will open the workshop. The Dalai Lama's representative in Australia, Chhime R Chhoekeyapa, is coming from Canberra to attend.

In the past 25 years, there has been

increasing contact between the two philosophical traditions specifically on questions relating to the nature of mind.

Western philosophers of mind have the advantage of drawing on science. Tibetan Buddhist philosophers, on the other hand, have methods for putting philosophical principles regarding mind, body and the nature of the world into practice — the spiritual technology of advanced meditation which is today an object of scientific