

Red

ISSUE 03 MAY 2009

Nature's Cure

Medicine made by
science and tradition



Fitzgerald's legacy

Water—have we reached
the tipping point?

Can hard times lead to
good times?

VC

Griffith University
Vice Chancellor and President

PROFESSOR IAN O'CONNOR



Australia's higher education sector faces the prospect of significant transformation with the release of the Bradley and Cutler reports late last year.

The Bradley report heralds a renewed focus on students and the system rather than individual universities. Ambitious targets have been set to raise participation and completion rates for higher education across our population—particularly aiming for 40 per cent of people aged 25–34 to hold a bachelors degree by 2025.

Our Education Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, has announced that the Government will vigorously pursue its ambition for 20 per cent of higher education undergraduates being people from low socio-economic backgrounds by 2020.

Meanwhile our Minister for Innovation, Senator Kim Carr, has confirmed that building bridges between researchers and industry will be critical to the Government achieving its new business innovation targets. In fact he calls for a 25 per cent increase in the proportion of businesses engaging in innovation over the next decade.

Never before has higher education played such a vital role in securing the country's future prosperity and social cohesion.

In this edition of *Red* we lead with research collaborations between our university, business and industry that may soon find the cure for malaria among other great discoveries. We also reflect on the 20-year legacy of the Fitzgerald Inquiry; celebrate artistic vibrancy; and examine several topics of deep interest to our society.

Red has just won a Gold Quill Award of Merit from the International Association of Business Communicators, so we hope you are part of a growing audience of supporters who enjoys reading about our work.



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The Griffith University Art Collection

Griffith Artworks (GAW) is a small organisation that provides cultural asset management, curatorial and research publication services at Dell Gallery, Queensland College of Art, and across the five campus zones of Griffith University. GAW is the management authority for more than 3500 objects in the Griffith University Art Collection and administers the On-Campus Exhibition Program (OCEP) that displays the collection in thematic and curated groups on over 120 approved sites between the Gold Coast and South Bank, Brisbane. Almost 20 per cent of the collection is on display at any given time, one of the highest rates of exposure for any public collection of art in Australia.

In the past two years some very significant gifts have entered the collection, with a value in excess of \$1 million. The Gordon and Leanne Bennett Gift was accessioned during 2007–2008, and consists of more than 120 works on paper. This extensive holding is now the largest by the artist in any public collection in Australia and covers Bennett's graphic output since his graduation from Queensland College of Art in 1988. Included are hand coloured collographs, lino and woodcuts, lithographs, etchings, silkscreens, monotypes and digital prints, some of which remain uneditioned and unique, and two large self-portrait paintings on paper. The works have been documented in a hardback publication published by Griffith Artworks, titled *OUT OF PRINT* Gordon Bennett: A survey of prints to print-outs 1984–2004.



BACK COVER

Gordon Bennett
Notes to Basquiat: Haunted 2000
Synthetic polymer paint on linen

Copyright courtesy
Griffith University Art Collection.



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This environmentally friendly process saves water and reduces toxins released into the air and entering our waterways.

Snapshots



\$2.3 million language boost

An Australia-first alliance between Queensland's three largest universities will expand higher learning in a range of Asian and European languages. With \$2.27 million in Australian Government funding, Griffith University, The University of Queensland and Queensland University of Technology will pool teaching of at least nine languages. Students at all three institutions, which together have about 110,000 enrolments, will be able to major in Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Russian and Spanish. Students who study at award level at one of the three universities will be credited as though they were studying at their own institution.

Magic mushrooms

Identifying the therapeutic potential of Australian mushrooms is one of the research projects underway at Griffith University in an effort to build the scientific evidence base for natural products and complementary medicines. Pharmacist Dr Evelin Tiralongo is screening native Australian mushrooms for anti-cancer activity and their ability to prevent bacterial infections such as *Helicobacter pylori*, the cause of peptic ulcers, and *Campylobacter jejuni*, a common cause of diarrhoea. "There are about 140,000 species of mushrooms worldwide and only 14,000 have been described so far. We know about 5 per cent of those have pharmacological properties so there is plenty of scope yet to find more mushrooms which are clinically useful," she said. The research is supported by funding from the National Institute for Complementary Medicine, a recent Federal Government initiative to advance knowledge in the area.



Technology referees 'chucking'

The International Cricket Council (ICC) and iconic Marylebone Cricket Club have funded Griffith University and Australia's elite sporting bodies to develop a wearable, real-time electronic sensor to identify illegal bowling action. The device, which will be mounted on a bowler's arm, will instantly assess bowling action. ICC regulations stipulate a 15-degree tolerance threshold for elbow extension in the bowling action. Griffith University engineers will work with Cricket Australia and the Australian Institute of Sport, which have researched bowling actions for the past 20 years. Researcher Dr Daniel James said the technology would use a combination of accelerometers, gyroscopes and wireless inertial sensors. "It will be able to record minute position changes with technologies such as magnetometers and GPS to ensure a high level of accuracy," he said. "Players and spectators have got used to technology such as the third umpire, stump cam, 'snicko' and infra-red replays. None of these replaces a human umpire, but they are a useful supplementary tool."

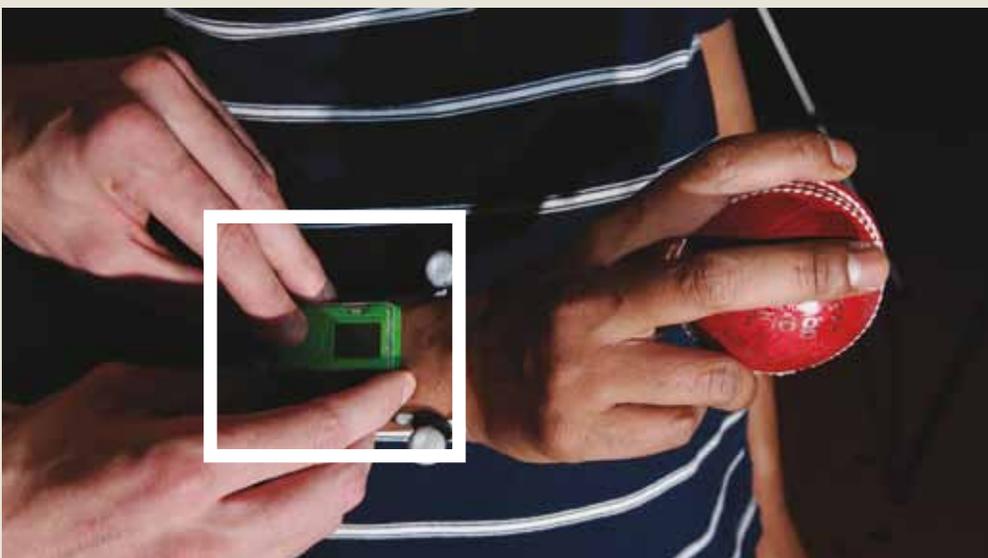
Stole blessing

Griffith University has become one of the first Australian universities to provide its Indigenous students with culturally designed stoles for use in graduations. Designed by Indigenous artists from Griffith, there are three versions of the stoles—one incorporating the colours of the Aboriginal flag, one incorporating colours of the Torres Strait Islander flag, and one for students identifying with both communities. The artists, Deann Grant and Eddie Nona, have spoken about their concepts, which were done in consultation with community elders, being a valued reminder of the academic rites of passage long after graduation. Eddie Nona entitled his design *Mab Neseurm* or *Journey to the Stars*, and says the placement of the Dhari and star, cultural symbols for Torres Strait Islanders, at the top of the stole is symbolic of the student reaching their goals. An important dimension of the development of the stoles was the traditional Torres Strait Island blessing, which acknowledged the contribution from the communities.



Island inspiration

Peel Island is known among Moreton Bay "boaties" for beautiful Horseshoe Bay, however, it is also an important historical, ecological and cultural heritage site. The island contains the physical remains of the only intact example in Australia of a multi-racial lazaret, a former quarantine facility based on the principle of isolation. Its isolation, and fascinating history, makes it an inspirational site for artists to take time away from the mainland to work. Many artists have benefited from the Peel Island Artists' Residency Project which was established after discussions between Roland Dowling of the Environmental Protection Agency, and Professor Pat Hoffie, research leader at Sustainable Environment and Culture, Asia-Pacific at the Queensland College of Art. As many as six artists stay for up to four days at the compound, where they spend their time working, talking and eating together, often resulting in work that reflects the way in which the island's history lingers on into the present.



Indigenous sentencing

Indigenous-centred court practices for domestic violence matters are being assessed with positive preliminary results. Griffith Law School researcher Dr Elena Marchetti has been conducting preliminary research into these courts for the past two years, with particular focus on cases in New South Wales and Queensland. Initial findings reveal Indigenous sentencing courts are more culturally appropriate in dealing with Indigenous family violence cases than mainstream magistrates courts. While not practising traditional Indigenous justice the courts are less formal than mainstream courts, allowing them to address issues beyond simply sentencing an offender for their violent behaviour. More than 30 currently operate across Australia, excluding Tasmania.



Indonesia–Australia environmental partnership

The Government of Indonesia has opened a research centre at Griffith University dedicated to battling the effects of climate change and preventing environmental degradation in the Indonesian region. A world-first for Indonesia, the Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Development for Indonesia will provide a range of initiatives to assist the nation develop sustainably and mitigate the impact of climate change. Education programs will include environmental science, resource management, environmental rehabilitation and urban planning for environment ministry staff, plus a range of study exchange opportunities for both Australian and Indonesian students.



Snakebite fight

Australia might be home to the most venomous snakes in the world, but it is developing countries that pay the price when fangs meet human flesh. Griffith University Health economist Professor Paul Scuffham said several hundred thousand deaths occur each year from the millions of snakebites. Most deaths occur in countries where access to high quality antivenoms is poor. Scuffham is one of several Australians leading a global initiative to reduce the incidence of snakebites and improve management when they do occur. He said some of the simplest strategies can be the most effective. Boots for workers or trenches around sleeping villagers may be as important as improving the quality, affordability and distribution of appropriate antivenoms.





natures cure



Scientists and Aboriginal elders collaborate with nature to make medicine.

TIM THWAITES REPORTS

PHOTOGRAPHY **CHRIS STACEY**

In 1986, while collecting stories for a book on the Aboriginal contribution to building the Kimberley pastoral industry, Paul Marshall's attention was grabbed by a tale he heard from one of the elders.

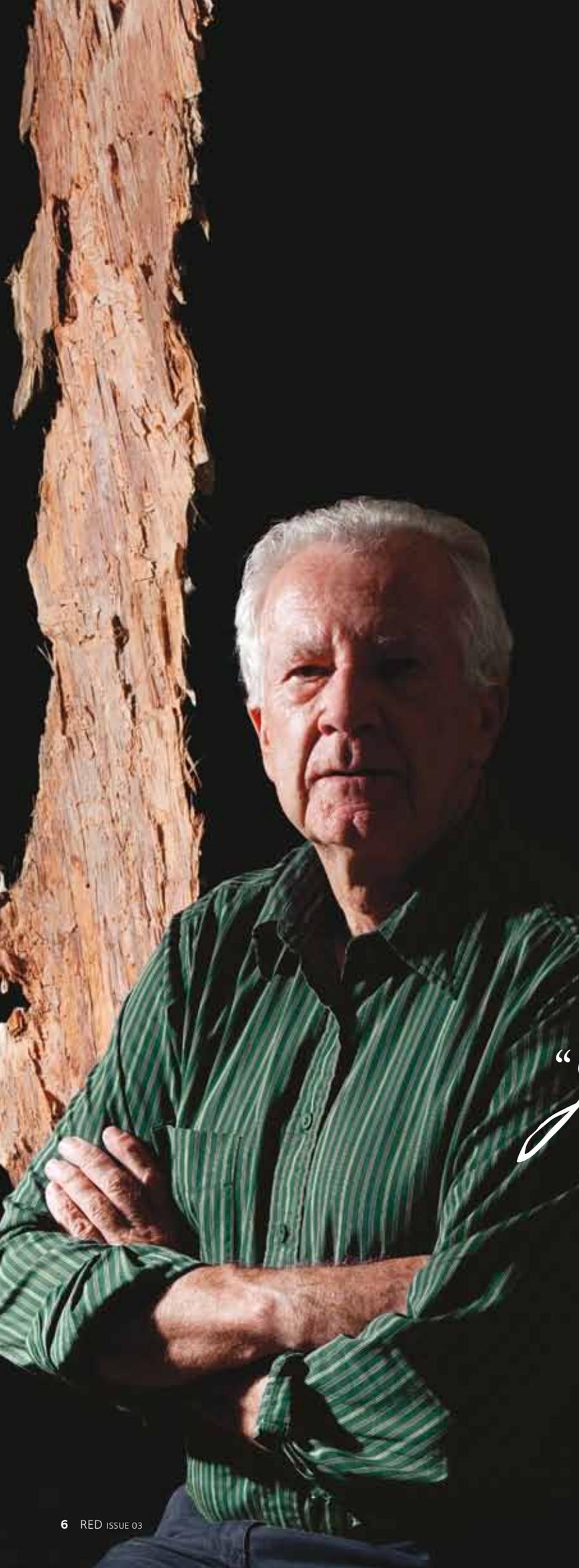
John Watson—for whom Marshall had worked as administrator of the Kimberley Land Council Aboriginal Corporation—showed him where he had lost the top of one of his fingers. Watson explained he had been hunting a freshwater crocodile in a billabong, when his prey suddenly turned around and bit him. It hurt terribly, and he was a long way from medical aid. But the Aboriginal elder had the benefit of local traditional medical knowledge. Nearby, he said in a matter-of-fact way, was a tree whose bark takes the pain away.

Now that, thought Marshall, could develop into a great deal more than local knowledge. He was well aware that the world's pharmaceutical industry was always looking for effective new painkillers. If whatever this bark contained

was effective, not only might it provide relief to millions, but it could also generate a revenue stream to allow the local Indigenous people from the Nygkina and Mangala nations realise some of their dreams.

But it would have to be managed in the right way. "Because they freely shared their heritage, Indigenous people the world over have not benefited from their intellectual property," Marshall said. "All too often they told researchers about their traditional medicines, but when pharmaceuticals were developed from them, no one thought to give the original owners of the intellectual property a share of the proceeds."

After consulting legal friends in Sydney, Marshall went on a search to find the best researchers in Australia for discovering and developing drugs from natural products. His quest led him to Professor Ron Quinn and his group at Griffith University. "He was clearly the leader in the field," Marshall said.



That expertise was reflected in Quinn's appointment as inaugural director of the Eskitis Institute for Cell and Molecular Therapies, established at Griffith in 2003 by amalgamating three existing centres. The Institute is built around two highly commercial assets—a library of natural compounds known as Nature Bank, and a team of more than 60 chemists and biologists with the expertise to use it effectively. It also hosts the National Centre for Adult Stem Cell Research and a node of the Cancer Therapeutics Cooperative Research Centre. Nature Bank was initiated by Quinn and constructed during a 15-year collaboration with European pharmaceutical giant, AstraZeneca, which invested more than \$100 million.

At its heart is a collection of more than 45,000 samples of plants and animals from the Great Barrier Reef, the Queensland rainforest, the Tasmanian marine environment and Papua New Guinea, as well as herbal ingredients of Chinese traditional medicines. This huge biological resource includes representatives from more than 60 per cent of the Earth's plant families and about 9500 marine invertebrates.

But Nature Bank is much more than a static reference library of natural compounds. Researchers at the Eskitis Institute have combined the latest technology and their own expertise to process and catalogue the material in an innovative way which makes searching for biologically active compounds—drug leads—much quicker and more likely to be successful.

As a result the Eskitis Institute is working in partnership with some of the world's biggest drug companies, such as Pfizer, and with not-for-profit drug development programs, such as the Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV) and the Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi), as well as smaller, start-up companies and university research teams. The projects in which it is involved range from the Aboriginal painkiller through to new ways of fighting infection to cancer therapies and new drugs to fight tropical diseases.

At the heart of living things is biochemistry—untold thousands of reactions constructing, breaking up and changing molecules; moving, mixing and separating bio-materials; trapping, storing and releasing energy. Such reactions build bones, fire nerve impulses and dissolve and transport oxygen.

“You’ve got to think of the typical conditions which were treated by traditional medicines.”

PROFESSOR RON QUINN

Professor Ron Quinn (left).

These activities of life are usually the product of long pathways of reactions, where the product of one becomes the raw material of the next. The ultimate impact of disease is to interrupt or modify these pathways, thus leading to biochemical imbalances. And that's where drugs can assist, clearing the blockage and/or restoring the balance.

In the struggle to survive and leave offspring, plants and animals interact and influence one another, often at the molecular level. We give the molecules involved in these interactions names such as nutrients, poisons, and pheromones. It's not surprising then, that many of our most powerful and effective drugs have come from the natural world—the antibiotic penicillin from fungi, the heart drug digitalis from foxglove, the pain reliever morphine from poppies and the nerve stimulant strychnine from the poison nut tree.

Knowledge of the impact of natural products provided much of the original basis of medicine. Even in these days of drug design, the pharmaceutical industry still looks to the natural world for inspiration.

The collections of natural products from Queensland have been undertaken using the expertise of the Queensland Herbarium and the Queensland Museum. All the samples of plants and animals are identified, catalogued and stored in those institutions by experienced researchers who use the latest global positioning system technology to record from where their samples were taken. Dozens of new species have been discovered as part of this work. A portion of every sample is then passed on to Eskitis where it is dried—freeze dried in the case of marine animals—then ground up into powder and stored.

Each sample potentially contains hundreds, possibly thousands of biological compounds. But that molecular diversity can be unlocked these days by taking a minuscule amount, a few thousandths of a gram, and dissolving it in liquid in one of 384 tiny depressions or wells set into a plate measuring 12.8 by 8.5 centimetres. Each well can be tested with a chemical or biological probe to see if there is any reaction. Sometimes that will involve developing a means of detecting the

“because they freely shared their heritage, Indigenous people the world over have not benefited from their intellectual property.”

PAUL MARSHALL

interaction. The whole process is automated using robotic technology and, using high throughput techniques, the entire library can now be tested in less than a week.

For instance, working for MMV, Eskitis researchers tested the malaria parasite against powder extracts from its library. What they came up with was a fraction of a marine invertebrate which killed the parasite stone dead. From this extract, the researchers have isolated the active compound, and determined that it has a unique chemical structure which specifically targets and kills the parasite. In order to make all this work possible, they also developed a new way of detecting the parasite's death. For this, they won the MMV's Project of the Year award for 2007.

But it's not their chemical expertise that sets Eskitis apart from other drug discovery operations, says Quinn. It's what they've managed to do with their original material on the basis of their experience. “It turns out that testing the raw extracts against target compounds is not a terribly efficient approach, because there's a lot of material in the extract that could never be developed into a drug.”

That's because in order to be taken into the body—through the pores of the skin as a cream or into the blood stream as an injection or via the digestive system as a tablet—and then distributed and absorbed into cells, a compound has to possess certain characteristics in terms of size, surface area, charge and chemical composition.

What Quinn and his team at Eskitis have been able to do, is separate, from their extracts, only those compounds which have such drug-like properties. After working through only 18,000 of their 45,000 extracts, the institute now has about 200,000 fractions, each containing three or four compounds which could become drug leads. In short, their processing gives those with whom they collaborate a much greater chance of developing a promising compound into a practical product.

And that's important, because it's rare to find a lead like the Kimberley painkiller, which from its past history of Indigenous

use, can be taken into the body, has an impact and is likely to be safe. That's also what makes the collaboration with a Chinese traditional medicine company and the addition of its extracts to Nature Bank so valuable, Quinn says.

Given these advantages, it seems surprising that he believes Indigenous or traditional medicine will not provide many compounds of interest to pharmaceutical companies.

"You've got to think of the typical conditions which were treated by traditional medicines. They were usually infectious diseases, the sort of thing we treat with antibiotics these days. But in the developed

world the medical need is now in treating chronic diseases, conditions of degeneration and old age, such as Alzheimer's and cancer. These weren't around when people were using traditional medicines."

Whatever the case, Nature Bank and Eskitis's proprietary techniques for using it have certainly been attractive to large drug companies. Since its exclusive contract with AstraZeneca ended in 2007, Eskitis is continuing to work with that company on two compounds it identified with relevance to cancer and respiratory medicine. And the Institute has also signed agreements potentially worth tens of millions of dollars

Pathway to *Commercialisation*

Bringing drugs to market typically costs hundreds of millions of dollars. That's why the only organisations that can afford to do it are some of the world's biggest companies, the multinational pharmaceutical conglomerates. Initially, a compound with potential—a lead—has to be found. This will involve designing or procuring a test, or assay, which demonstrates a beneficial action known as a drug target—boosting sensitivity to insulin, for instance, or deadening the response to pain, or killing or disabling a disease organism. The search then begins for a lead compound which hits the target. That lead may be found through designing a molecule from scratch, testing collections of known compounds or, as Eskitis does, screening a large library of novel natural products.

When first encountered, potential drug leads are typically part of an extract which contains many compounds, some of which may interfere with or mask detection of the lead. So the next stage is to isolate and purify the active ingredient and test its properties. Pharmacologists are particularly interested in pharmacokinetics—what happens to a compound inside the body, how quickly it is absorbed, where it ends up, and how it reacts with other compounds—and pharmacodynamics—what that compound does to the body.

Usually by this stage the structure of the drug lead is determined, and chemists will set to work to establish whether the compound can be made in the laboratory. If so, it may then be altered to limit its side effects or to make it safer, more effective or easier to administer.

Only after all this physical, chemical and biological data is assembled will the drug start to be tested as a potential medicine. First in animals, often mice and rats, and then in ever larger and carefully administered trials in humans, first for safety and then for efficacy. These trials are where the serious money goes. They take years and eat up millions and millions of dollars. But they are necessary for registration by the regulators of the world's big drug markets, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the European Medicines Agency (EMA).

Eskitis is a specialist institute working at the very beginning of this chain. How far its involvement extends depends on the compound and commercial interests. According to the business manager, Dr Stuart Newman, Eskitis really has two things to sell when it comes to drug discovery: its library of natural products, Nature Bank, and the expertise to use it efficiently. It has learned to package these commodities in flexible ways to make them attractive to the industry.

Typically, the institute will take drug discovery to the stage it has with the Kimberley painkiller. But instead of relying on traditional knowledge, it generally uses high throughput

robotic screening to scour Nature Bank to find the lead. The researchers then isolate the compound and assemble the necessary package of physical, chemical and biological information to allow companies to develop things further if they want. The institute is usually contracted to find compounds useful against a disease or for a particular therapy. It earns its keep by reaching milestones along the drug discovery pathway, and in royalties arising from future sales of any product based on the leads it finds. But in some cases, the Eskitis Institute will remain part of the development process for much longer.

The institute has a significant marketing edge over its competitors in the way it processes its extracts to leave only compounds with properties which enable them to be developed as drugs. This significantly increases the likelihood that any lead discovered can be developed further. And, says Newman, Eskitis is now taking this expertise a stage further.

"With the assistance of the Queensland Compound Library, which is housed in the Eskitis building, we can now prepare to order and send to customers a complete set of our library in 384-well microtitre plates covered and sealed with foil. It's enough for one particular assay. If the partner finds any of the wells of interest, we can go back to Nature Bank and identify all the compounds in those particular wells and send them to the partner for further work."

For further inquiries about commercialisation projects with Griffith University, please contact Griffith Enterprise on 61 7 3735 5489.



with Pfizer and a Swedish company, Innate Pharmaceuticals. For commercial reasons, these companies will only reveal in very general terms what they are interested in. Pfizer says it wants to screen for “the next generation of anti-infective medicine” and Innate, that it is looking for compounds which “disarm rather than destroy” bacteria in the hope that this will reduce the risk of the development of resistance.

In addition, there’s the work on malaria with MMV, in which the institute is collaborating with several other Australian institutions to help develop the drug lead into a medicine for use in the developing world (see Pathway to Commercialisation). Eskitis is now also working with DNDi on treatments for African trypanosomiasis or sleeping sickness.

The Kimberley story continues, and may well have a happy ending. When Marshall first approached Ron Quinn with his tree bark, he was greeted with caution. “We get a lot of people bringing things along to us,” says Quinn. “But we can only do something if we have a test system which shows an observable effect when the compound is added.”

Luckily, they found the bark contained several analgesics, and there are standard assay systems for such compounds. What’s more, Eskitis was successful in obtaining a grant from the National Health and Medical Research Council to fund a doctoral student to work on the project. They isolated several analgesic compounds including a family which is part of a completely new mechanism of pain relief, potentially as potent as morphine.

“I like what happened next,” says Quinn. Griffith University and the Jarlmadangah Burru Aboriginal Community took out patent applications for the compounds. “Then we handed it back to them.” And development is proceeding.

Last October, Quinn flew out to the remote settlement, 240 kilometres east of Broome. There Griffith University signed an agreement with the Aboriginal community to license the technology for commercialisation to Avexis Pty Ltd, a Gold Coast-based company started by a group of businessmen experienced in the biotech industry.

“There’s an unmet need in the management of pain,” says Avexis director, Andrew Loch. “Globally, pain therapeutics is a very big market. The exciting side of this is that we already have background data indicating that these compounds have a safe and efficacious outcome, which significantly lowers the risk of commercialisation.” He says the company not only has the option of developing multiple drugs, but may also be able to develop a product along the lines of the traditional medicine which could be sold over the counter. The company is discussing raising the capital it needs with potential investors.

Meanwhile the Jarlmadangah Burru Aboriginal Community has established its own company, JJ Lab Pty Ltd, to supply the raw materials necessary for development and production. “It has been a major struggle to find financial resources for community development,” says Marshall, who has a financial stake in the project and is the community’s project coordinator. “But this community is very proactive and has worked hard. It has a bilingual school, a clinic, a community centre and a store, and runs a cattle station, an aquaculture venture, a sign-writing company and tourism business as well.

“So we hope this can become a sustainable industry for the community. The people here feel honoured to be in a position to contribute one of their traditional medicines to the world to help deal with pain.” ■

Tim Thwaites is a freelance science writer and broadcaster based in Melbourne. He is the current national president of Australian Science Communicators.

LIVE BOAT RESURFACES IN COURT (Part 1)

The Sydney Morning Herald

Special Edition

THE FITZGERALD REPORT

Queensland comes clean

Police, PS set for shake-up

A sub get r

BRISBANE: The state of public administration and political conduct in Queensland are set for an environmental test following the release of the Fitzgerald report. The report, which details the state's political and administrative structure, is expected to lead to a shake-up of the Queensland Police and the Public Service. The report also details the state's political and administrative structure, and is expected to lead to a shake-up of the Queensland Police and the Public Service.

TIME AUSTRALIAN EXCLUSIVE

Fitzgerald Speaks

The Man Who Lifted The Lid on Queensland

THE AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW

Fitzgerald's model to end corruption

Johnston takes a swipe at banks

The Courier-Mail

BRISBANE, Tuesday, July 4, 1999

Nats set for battle

Fitzgerald urges electoral review

Major recommendations

THE QUEENSLAND PARTY... Fitzgerald... electoral review... Major recommendations...

THE

Queensland comes clean

Fitzgerald calls for sweeping reforms

Thoughts of Chairman Fitzgerald

THE JUDICIAL AGE

With skill, care and courage, Mr Fitzgerald QC, has completed the mission of a whole community. More than that, he has prescribed a cure.

CRIME AND MISCONDUCT

FITZGERALD'S LEGACY 20 YEARS ON

RUSSELL ROBINSON REPORTS

PHOTOGRAPHY CHRIS STACEY

On July 3, 2009, it will be 20 years since Tony Fitzgerald, QC, handed down the far-reaching report of his commission of inquiry into police corruption and other official misconduct in Queensland.

Russell Robinson covered the Fitzgerald Inquiry from September 1987 until its conclusion, and reflects on its impact.

From the moment in September 1987, early in the Fitzgerald Commission's hearings, when Assistant Police Commissioner Graeme Parker took the stand and admitted to accepting bribes, it was obvious that the inquiry would have major consequences for the state.

Dr Noel Preston, an adjunct professor in the Key Centre for Ethics, Law, Justice and Governance at Griffith University, vividly remembers hearing the news of Parker's confession. "It was a watershed moment in the inquiry. This was unheard of, without precedence in our experience. Previously any inquiry, notably the National Hotel Inquiry of the 1960s, was manipulated and controlled by a combination of police and political forces."

The Fitzgerald Inquiry defied its many powerful enemies, sitting for a total of 238 days and hearing evidence from 339 witnesses. At first its hearings concentrated on "the joke", a police corruption racket by which members of the licensing branch extorted protection money from prostitution and gambling operators; then Commissioner Fitzgerald moved on to consider whether this corruption went to the top of the force. After disturbing evidence about relationships between the Police Commissioner,

Sir Terrence Lewis, and other official figures in Queensland, the inquiry turned to preferential treatment received by some developers and bankers in their dealings with the government. Star witnesses included the Premier, Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen; the Police Commissioner, Sir Terrence Lewis; and the self-confessed police bagman Jack Herbert. Various figures, including Lewis, ultimately went to jail.

But it was Tony Fitzgerald's forensic deconstruction of the intricate web of improper personal and institutional relationships that passed for good governance in the sunshine state, on one hand, and the state's weak democratic safeguards, on the other. This really set his inquiry apart, particularly through the elaborate plan outlined by his report for the creation of a better future.

Its two pillars were a Criminal Justice Commission (CJC), to investigate complaints of serious misconduct against police, MPs and other public figures, and the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission (EARC), both now defunct.

While the CJC structure was familiar through similar commissions elsewhere, EARC was Fitzgerald's own brain child, and the heart of

"A LOT OF THE FEAR, THE NAKED FEAR,
HAS GONE."

NIGEL POWELL

SUPPORT FOR WHISTLEBLOWERS STILL OUT OF TUNE

Is Australia getting better at protecting whistleblowers who come forward to tell the government agency they work for that something inside it is badly amiss?

Professor A.J. Brown, a senior lecturer in Griffith University's Law School, detects hopeful signs, but still believes uniform official support for whistleblowers will take some time to achieve and needs to be driven by legislation.

Brown was leader of a three-year research project that found that fewer than 2 per cent of public interest whistleblowers received organised support from their government agency while 70 per cent of agencies surveyed had no procedures in place for assessing the risk of reprisal when officials in their agency blew the whistle, according to his team's report, *Whistling While They Work*.

The project, which focused on the practical aspects of managing whistleblowing, studied 304 federal, state and local government agencies, and interviewed 7600 public servants.

Brown, who was an associate to Tony Fitzgerald, QC, when the judge was president of the Queensland Court of Appeal in 1998, says the Fitzgerald experience underlined the importance of putting in place mechanisms to encourage whistleblowers to come forward. "The Fitzgerald Inquiry ended up offering indemnities and accessing people, and being able to flush out people's evidence," he says.

But the Fitzgerald Report was not very specific about how to handle whistleblowing: "So the legislation passed in Queensland and elsewhere from the early 1990s onwards was really a bit of a shot in the dark, in terms of what type of legislative approach should result in conscientious public servants coming forward more easily with information about wrongdoing. That was the background to our research."

Brown says that out of the hundreds of agencies they looked at, "there were quite a few that were doing it quite well, but we found lots and lots that were not making ... coherent or comprehensive efforts to manage whistleblowing."

In February, Federal Parliament's legal and constitutional affairs committee tabled a report recommending that a wide range of workers—public servants, contractors and consultants and their employees engaged by the public sector, members of the Australian Defence Force and Australian Federal Police and parliamentary staff—should be protected from criminal or civil legal action and workplace punishment for bona fide whistleblowing.

Welcoming the report, Brown says it is now up to the Government to honour an election commitment and turn these recommendations into law.



his vision for a more democratic Queensland. His report spelt out that it should review the state's electoral boundaries, oversee the separation of the Justice Minister and Attorney-General functions and their offices, review the restrictive laws introduced by the Bjelke-Petersen government on the right to public assembly, and oversee the creation of a "comprehensive system of parliamentary committees" in the state's unicameral legislature. It was as if EARC was intended to furnish Queensland with all the checks and balances of a sophisticated modern democracy.

This was a most ambitious vision, one that required broad social support. Preston, a former convenor of Concerned Citizens, got involved as convenor of Citizens Against Corruption, formed when Fitzgerald's public hearings had concluded. "He [Fitzgerald] had, in effect, called on

**"PREVIOUSLY ANY
INQUIRY ...
WAS MANIPULATED
AND CONTROLLED."**

DR NOEL PRESTON

the community, media and so on to remain vigilant," Preston says. "We saw ourselves as a group that campaigned to keep the issue alive during the period while the report was being written, and running up to the next election when the government changed."

The result of that election in December 1989—the National Party government's defeat by Labor—was a direct outcome of the inquiry, and (afterwards, anyway) seemed a foregone conclusion.

It was "the end of the good ol' days" according to Matt Foley, a civil rights activist and lawyer who was among hundreds arrested in 1977 during protests against the Bjelke-Petersen government's ban on street-marching. He went on to become Attorney-General in the new Labor government led by Wayne Goss.

As Mr Foley wrote in *Griffith Review's* Hidden Queensland issue last year, the mistrust that had attached itself to Labor since the 1950s had finally morphed into disenchantment with the Nationals: "The blue-collar Catholic vote that left Labor in 1957 with a distrust of communism trusted Goss's discipline and came back to the fold. The middle class also wanted to give us a chance after the corruption revealed by the Fitzgerald Inquiry. I got to chair an all-party Parliamentary Committee overseeing a commission to clean up the electoral laws as well as introduce judicial review, freedom of information and (this was particularly sweet) a *Peaceful Assembly Act* to enshrine a statutory right of peaceful protest. It was a golden age of reform."

It was in this climate that Griffith University's School of Criminology and Criminal Justice was established in 1992; in 1993, Professor Ross Homel was appointed as Head of School. Part of the school's vision was to expose police trainees to social science and the liberal arts in

addition to their traditional training, in line with the Fitzgerald Report's recommendation. The report noted that US research showed that authoritarian tendencies were lower and tolerance higher among better-educated police. Homel, now Director of Griffith University's Strategic Research Program for Social Change and Wellbeing, recalls that this program was resisted by police, and abandoned after three years.

Similarly, there was resistance from politicians on both sides of the divide as EARC and the CJC got down to work. As a part-time member of the CJC from 1994 to 1999, Homel helped defend the organisation when it was attacked by the National Party government. During the 1995 election campaign, Premier Borbidge had signed a memorandum of understanding with the police union which appeared to give the union leverage in political decisions about executive police appointments and

added: "We may have taken two or three steps forward, but we've also come back one and a half." He was particularly disturbed by an incident in which Brisbane police held down a 65-year-old homeless man and assaulted him, an event captured on CCTV:

"These guys did it where there were cameras. They felt secure enough to do that ... knowing there was a camera and that they'd be filmed."

Since then, police have attracted further criticism for using disproportionate force; one incident involved an officer using a Taser device on a 16-year-old girl who ignored a police order to move on.

Like Powell, Homel does not romanticise Queensland's progress since the Fitzgerald Report. He too regards recent police mistreatment of some homeless and vulnerable citizens as an indication that the police force in particular has some way to go.

"...ONE COULD HAVE HOPED THAT 20 YEARS AFTER FITZGERALD A MORE SOPHISTICATED, COMMUNITY-BASED MODEL OF POLICING WOULD APPLY."

PROFESSOR ROSS HOMEL

the powers of the CJC. The government countered a CJC inquiry into the memorandum with an inquiry of its own into the CJC; one of the heads of the government's inquiry was Peter Connolly, a retired judge and a former member of the Liberal Party.

The CJC took action in the Supreme Court to argue that the government's inquiry was biased. Homel gave evidence about a conversation Connolly had with him regarding the purpose of the inquiry. The Supreme Court ruled against the government, and the inquiry was closed down.

The Beattie Labor government which followed the Nationals in 1998 had its own problems with the CJC. It was seriously embarrassed by the commission's inquiry into the ALP's electoral practices, and by a separate inquiry by the state's Crime Commission into sexual allegations against a veteran member of the government, Bill D'Arcy.

In 2001, the government merged the two investigative bodies into the Crime and Misconduct Commission, with revamped roles and powers, a move which gained mixed reviews from close observers. To an interested outsider, one of the most remarkable things about the post-Fitzgerald era in Queensland is how public the struggles between governments and the standing commissions have been, a sign that something is working better in the sunshine state than it used to.

Two years ago, I visited Queensland to report on the 20th anniversary of the Fitzgerald Inquiry's establishment. Whistleblower Nigel Powell, a former member of the licensing branch whose revelations to the media helped set the Fitzgerald Inquiry in motion, had mixed feelings about developments, particularly in police culture. "A lot of the fear, the naked fear, has gone. There's also a lot more out in the open," he said. But he

"Queensland police are not unusual in this regard, but one could have hoped that 20 years after Fitzgerald a more sophisticated, community-based model of policing would apply." The legacy of the inquiry is "enduring institutions, electoral reform and a new culture", but "it's a very mixed picture", he says. "The most enduring legacy is the transformation in the institutions; and the formation of the Crime and Misconduct Commission, on balance, is still a good thing. Although I have many criticisms of that organisation, it's still better to have it than not to have it. You have to keep making it work ... [such bodies] don't work automatically." ■

Russell Robinson is a senior investigative reporter for the Herald Sun, Melbourne.

The Fitzgerald Commission of Inquiry's legacy will be under examination in several forums in months to come, including the inaugural Griffith University – Tony Fitzgerald Lecture which will be presented by the Honourable Arthur Chaskalson, former President of the Constitutional Court and Chief Justice of South Africa, at the State Library of Queensland on the evening of July 28, 2009.

The Griffith University Tony Fitzgerald Scholarship Fund was created to support future practitioners and researchers who wish to focus their study upon issues of vulnerability and challenge that will contribute to the Fitzgerald Report's legacy of reform. For more information about the Tony Fitzgerald Lecture Series and Scholarship Fund, please contact Kellie Hinchy on 617 3735 6988.

HARDSHIP + *Happiness*

CAN HARD TIMES LEAD TO GOOD TIMES?

ANDREW CORNELL REPORTS

PHOTOGRAPHY CHRIS STACEY

It is quite possible, even likely, the catastrophic Victorian bushfires will have a positive impact on gross domestic product (GDP), that standard measure of economic growth. Abominable as that may sound, it would follow the pattern of other human and environmental disasters such as the Exxon Valdez oil tanker wreck and major hurricanes in the United States.

The economics are straightforward even if the morality is not. Catastrophes provoke both government and private sector responses, response and rebuilding create economic output. Yet these events clearly do not contribute to wellbeing in any recognisable way.

There could not be a clearer demonstration of the problem with equating economic growth with better societies.

"GDP has become the primary driver of policy and GDP is what it is; it measures economic output. The challenge is to come up with something more meaningful," says Griffith University Associate Professor Geoffrey Woolcock from the Urban Research Program.

But he warns: "Another measure won't necessarily be as simple. We are talking here about encompassing much broader connectivity, the family, the environment."

The conundrum of measuring "progress" increasingly preoccupies the minds of some of the Western world's most respected thinkers. Nobel Prize winner and former World Bank chief economist Joseph Stiglitz has been at the forefront of this challenge to rethink economics and wellbeing and is part of a major Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) project.

"For 60 years gross domestic product ... has been the yardstick by which the world has measured and understood economic and social progress," Stiglitz wrote on the OECD Observer site this year.



“

**I think there is a collective sense of where
have we got to? People talk about a**

CRISIS OF TIME

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR GEOFFREY WOOLCOCK

”

“However, it has failed to capture some of the factors that make a difference in people’s lives and contribute to their happiness, such as security, leisure, income distribution and a clean environment—including the kinds of factors which growth itself needs to be sustainable.

“Developing measures that truly capture progress is a subject close to my heart and indeed is the focus of the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress launched in 2008.” Stiglitz chairs the commission.

The growing body of research into happiness suggests human nature is resilient but elastic; it tends to return to equilibrium. Thus the longstanding theories that it is not absolute values—of riches, for example—but relative values which are important such as: “I feel rich if I have more than my neighbour.”

Global comparisons of happiness and life satisfaction, while of questionable robustness, also tend to suggest the happiness of populations is independent of wealth and development. Some developing or impoverished countries have happy citizens, some advanced nations seem unhappier. Woolcock notes that after previous national disasters an overwhelming response from the public has also been experienced, together with anecdotal evidence that people are “nicer” to one another. “Unfortunately, that effect seems to fade over time but the positive thing is it seems to appear anew at each disaster,” he says.

Richer nations, on the whole, are happier, but only up to a certain point when extra wealth appears to make no difference. A burst of wealth or a new acquisition only has a temporary effect on happiness.

The current financial crisis then will prove an interesting moment in the study of happiness and wellbeing. “The ‘treadmill’ is

very interesting language,” says Woolcock. “People do have a sense they have been running a long time and getting rewarded. But now—and you do hear people say in a funny way it’s a relief to have lost a high-paying job—I think there is a collective sense of where have we got to? People talk about a crisis of time.”

Woolcock says there have been encouraging signs from the new Rudd Government that it will have a broader sense of wellbeing in society than economic growth. He points to socially inclusive policies, the Closing the Gap initiative for Indigenous people.

Griffith has been at the forefront of such thinking and recently ran a conference called *The Good Life?* exploring whether that idea meant the same to all Australians. The conference explored how social inclusion aspirations could contribute and the role governments and social institutions play in achieving the “good life” for all citizens.

Other countries, notably Bhutan with its Gross National Happiness index, already attempt to more formally measure broader growth. Woolcock says there is much to be learned from Bhutan’s index but adds it might be more palatable for Australia to look at Canada, a very similar economy, whose national accounts have very comprehensive wellbeing measures. Such measures are possible in Australia as the Australian Bureau of Statistics has excellent data on wellbeing such as education, health and longevity. Victoria has already begun initiatives.

A much lauded BBC Television series, *The Science of Happiness*, cited an adviser to then British Prime Minister Tony Blair as saying that “within the next 10 years the government would be measured against how happy it made everybody”. While the science of happiness remains at early stages, there is strong evidence happy people live longer than depressed people.

Meanwhile, Woolcock says the current age of anxiety has already seen shifts in spending patterns with a growing trend to philanthropy—which studies show has a more enduring impact on happiness than spending—and volunteering. Even in these cash-strapped times Australians donated more than \$300 million for Victorian bushfire victims.

Despite their grumbling about the fickleness of Generation Y, employers note this generation already is more “connected” and not just technologically. For example, National Australia Bank’s decision to be carbon neutral by 2010. “I was inundated with emails; our staff were emphatic it was the right thing to do,” says then CEO John Stewart.

FAIR, the forum for other indicators of wealth, which is contributing to the OECD debate, offers an analysis of the global credit crisis which criticises the social inequality behind products like subprime mortgages.

“Regarding employment, the issue should not boil down to the question ‘what growth in GDP do we need to create jobs?’ but rather ‘what goals for sustainable wellbeing and social cohesion should be promoted and what decent and useful jobs are needed to achieve these goals?’” FAIR argues.

Happiness though remains a subject in development as far as policy goes. Bhutan’s GNH seems to suit its Buddhist culture but legislating for “happiness” runs the risk of impinging on liberties. If people in marriages and nuclear families tend to be happier, should this state of affairs be legislated, for example? So-called beeper studies, where subjects are randomly beeped and quizzed on their current state of mind, are not exactly socially encouraging. They find that despite what people think, they are happier at work than when on holidays. Marital studies show couples start off happy, become less happy when they have children but then are happier again as “empty nesters”.

Happiness is nothing if not complex. As Stiglitz admits: “Most people would probably agree that there is more to life than money, but it is unlikely they would agree on how to define the ‘quality of life.’” ■

Andrew Cornell is a leading business journalist and writer of books on business and Japan. He is a senior writer and columnist for The Australian Financial Review and its magazines.

GNH PROVIDES AN ALTERNATIVE YARDSTICK IN BHUTAN

For the last decade or more in Western societies, according to Griffith University’s Professor of Environmental Planning, Lex Brown, the economy became almost a total proxy for what was considered progress. “At the policy level, if it didn’t drive economic growth, it wasn’t important,” he says.

Not so in the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan where policy is by decree driven by “happiness”. Brown is the principal figure in a deep relationship between Griffith University and Bhutan involving half-tuition scholarships and an AusAID Public Sector Linkages Program. Bhutanese government delegates receive specialised coursework sessions and one-on-one training in Thimphu, Bhutan, as well as further training and work attachments in Brisbane. Griffith University’s Bhutanese scholarships focus on environmental science.

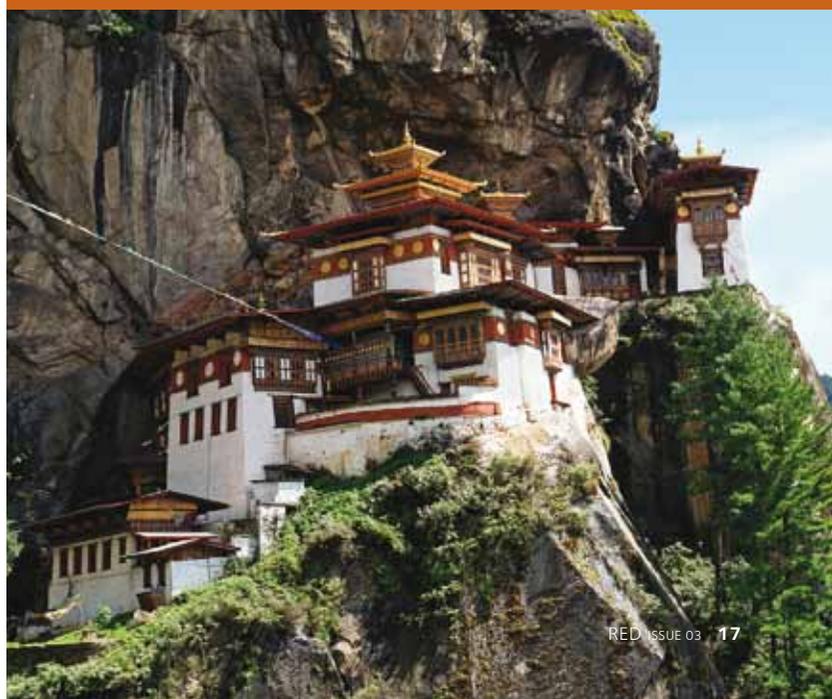
Brown says while the holistic measure of Gross National Happiness (GNH) is a policy objective in the Kingdom, many bureaucrats and technocrats, such as engineers and economists, have been trained in western institutions. “Their thinking is not that different to any other mainstream officers whether looking at building roads or mule tracks,” Brown says.

An engineer himself, Brown says if a broader vision, such as GNH, is to be the prime driver of decision making, decisions must come through its filter. While Australia doesn’t have a policy such as Bhutan’s, successive governments have been shifting towards broader thinking, particularly when it comes to environmental matters.

“Whether in Bhutan or Australia, you can change the debate at that visionary level and in Australia now we do have notions of environmental sustainability, we just don’t have a formal measure,” he says.

Brown says people still smile or smirk when they hear of happiness measures but he points to the growing academic body of research and conferences, including Griffith’s own *The Good Life?* and the fourth annual *Happiness and its Causes* conference being held in Sydney in May.

“Happiness as a notion is becoming accepted but it is more than just about today, it is about relationships, other people, connection with the environment, it is more than a hedonistic thing,” Brown says.



HARDKNOCKS

WHAT DOES OUR
HIGH INCIDENCE
OF VIOLENCE SAY
ABOUT US?

KRIS OLSSON
ASKS

PHOTOGRAPHY
CHRIS STACEY

Saturday night, somewhere in urban or rural Australia. A raucous backyard party. A spill of adolescents on the footpath, alcohol-fuelled. A push, a shove, an insult. A wild punch, a scream and suddenly the sirens. Police, ambulance. A stretcher, the siren again, wailing now: it is the sound of shattering: a bone, a heart, a family.

Across town, the same night. In a kitchen, someone asking the wrong question. Making the wrong sounds, smiling the wrong smile. He demands the right question, different sounds, a better smile, and she tries. Not good enough. Are you stupid? She's stupid. So stupid. She's not enough of anything. She does it on purpose. Needles him. The bottle in his hand is full of needles and rage and when he throws it that's what hits her, knocking her backwards, she falls among the shards and splinters. A child crouches behind the door, watching her mother bleed.

If these scenes don't shock you, if they seem familiar or even humdrum, you are probably in the majority, someone for whom the images of violence, and violence itself, have become ordinary.

That we are inured to blood and cruelty may say something about our hearts and may say more about our overload of media and information. But it is of great interest to people like Paul Mazerolle, who wants to plumb the source and context of a spike in the incidence of violence in families and among our youth.

Professor Mazerolle, director of the Violence Research and Prevention Program at Griffith University, has recently found that assaults committed by young men aged 15 to 19 increased by 15 per cent in the 10 years to 2005, and that assaults committed by young women increased "dramatically". That research is backed up nationally and internationally: the White Ribbon Foundation reports that one in three Australian women are affected, and that 12 per cent of women aged 18-24 had experienced at least one incidence of violence in the previous 12 months. Paul Mazerolle wants to know why.

Is it better reporting or simply more violence?

by mass communication, like text messaging and digital messaging.

"Alcohol is a big part of the problem. It freezes your moral conscience, the voice that says it's wrong to bash someone. Especially in a group," he says.

"If you're alone and sober it's very different to being drunk with a group at midnight and someone looks at you the wrong way."

He points to teenage parties with 30 invitees at which 400 show up, as well as the accepted culture of binge drinking, especially at events like Schoolies. Recent legislation banning parents from supplying under-18s with alcohol is a positive move, he says, though it will take a while to work.

This is the context—the "normalising" of alcohol behaviour and of violent behaviour—that is at the centre of his research. "I'm looking at life course criminality, especially in families. For example, do kids growing up in violent families become violent adults? Does early exposure to violence, through adolescence, make it harder for some people to grow out of?"

He also urges a more comprehensive approach to family violence—more investment in programs for men who batter, a police response that is more focused on investigation, and more thinking around ways to make it easier for women to report family violence. And, better and more thorough data collection—so that researchers and services can better understand where violence is happening, to whom and by whom—so that effective preventative measures can be developed for individuals, families and communities.

That plea is echoed by Libby Lloyd, chair of the National Council to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children, which delivered its report to Government as *Red* went to press. Lloyd, who is also a foundation member of the Australian White Ribbon Day campaign, says the council will be calling for more stringent data collection to ensure, among other things, that researchers understand better what the data means.

"Alcohol is a big part of the problem. It freezes your moral conscience, the voice that says it's wrong to bash someone."

PROFESSOR PAUL MAZEROLLE

Perhaps both, he believes: data collection is better—though far from perfect—and the number of assaults is up.

"Though it isn't the numbers that are so disturbing, it's the severity of the violence," he says. "Especially the extreme forms of violence to strangers, at cab ranks for instance."

Mazerolle pinpoints several factors in the surge of youth violence: the use of alcohol among young people, peer pressure and the opportunity presented

"For instance, when we say we have increased reports of violence against women, we know women will report when they feel safe to do so. We know there is an increase in reporting where alcohol management has been put in place," she says.

The council will also urge governments to look more carefully at interventions that limit violence and at behaviour change—through more programs in universities and schools and even at playgroup level for children. Early development of skills for dealing with conflict is essential,

JENNIFER'S STORY

*not her real name

As a child, Jennifer was fostered out to an alcoholic woman and her violent partner. By day she would be left in the “Ladies’ Lounge” of the local pub while her mother drank; by night she would watch as her father smashed full dinner plates over her mother’s head. He would send Jennifer from the room while he punched her mother’s body, “making sissing noises like a boxer does”. She recognised the noises because she was taken to fights and knew the boxers. She was four years old.

By the time she was eight her mother was sending her to the pub to collect her brandy and out to the bin at night with the bottles. The night her father caught her at the bin it was her turn: a plate smashed over her and her head slapped hard.

“One night when I was about 10, we were in the lounge room—they were both drunk. He got the shits over something.” He walked over and hit her on the head, then started punching her ribs. For the first time she said to herself, do something Jenny.

“I ran out and went to the phone box. It took a lot of courage to call the police. I was so scared of how I was going to go home and explain myself for running out in the night. But I knew it would finally stop.

“The police came, two male officers. They were talking to her and to him. They took him aside. I snuck up to the door to hear what was happening. They accepted money from him and said, make sure the child doesn’t see that again. Then they left.

“He started on me after that. Physically and sexually. When I was 12, I finally ran away.”

Life would never be simple for Jennifer after that. Picked up by police and sent home, only to flee again, she entered the vicious cycle of institutionalisation, prostitution and eventually, prison. She now works with other women who have suffered violent and abusive childhoods and supports them as they re-build their lives.

she says, and has already proved effective in helping young people develop respectful relationships. “But we also have to build safe communities,” she warns; “communities have responsibilities in education and prevention too.”

Zoe Rathus, senior lecturer in the Griffith Law School, has worked with survivors of domestic violence since 1981. She was also legal coordinator of the Women’s Legal Service and chair of the Queensland Domestic Violence Council.

She isn’t surprised at the Mazerolle figures and says that, while safety issues have improved for parts of the population, it is not across the board.

“When we looked back at the Women’s Legal Service after 20 years, we had on the one hand a strong sense that things had changed. Women were leaving violent relationships earlier, and seeking out services more, but the things they were saying hadn’t changed much between 1984 and 2004,” she says.

“The types of violence they were reporting were the same. So for all the changes we’ve brought about, we haven’t been able to stop violence.”

Rathus is interested in the notion that behind the increase in assaults by young women may be a hardening of society’s attitude towards them, resulting in more reporting and more charges against young women than previously.

“One of the things that has changed is that women and girls live their lives more publicly now; working, going out at night. Even girls from middle-class families are out more, and consuming more alcohol than they once were,” she says.

“So is it that girls are more violent or that there are more public manifestations of that? And what about the effects of young people’s exposure to violence—whether it’s a war on television news, or a video clip, or reading about violence in the media—we normalise violence in the way we report it. In the end I don’t think kids are innately more violent; they’re living more public lives.” □

Kris Olsson is a writer and journalist. Her novel The China Garden was recently published by UQP.



SHORT SUPPLY

THE GLOBAL FOOD SHORTAGE
LEAVES ALL NATIONS
WANTING MORE

JOHN BARRON REPORTS

PHOTOGRAPHY CHRIS STACEY

When the price of crude oil soared towards \$US150 per barrel in mid-2008, many families in Australia felt the pinch. Filling the average family sedan with petrol went from around \$50 to \$100; the price of diesel more than doubled, adding to the cost of running the combine harvesters that bring in our nation's crops and the B-doubles that transport that produce from farm gate to supermarket. Suddenly food prices were up sharply; a loaf of bread in Brisbane cost 14 per cent more than in 2007, butter increased 17 per cent, baked beans rose 24 per cent ... it all started to add up.

But it wasn't just the record price of crude oil driving the price of everything else up. "Last year was a particularly bad year," says Professor Brendan Gleeson, Director of Urban Management and Policy at Griffith University. "The spike in food prices was the product of a bit of a perfect storm; world fuel prices, the supplanting of food production for bio-fuels and the failure of crops throughout the world due to prolonged drought."

And here in Australia, that created a double economic whammy; rising fuel and grocery prices pushed up our rate of inflation, and in response the Reserve Bank hiked interest rates and there was another substantial addition to our cost of living.

It was time to tighten our belts a notch or two. But while some Australians were looking for budget cuts of meat at the butchers or making a plunger of coffee in the office kitchenette rather than pay \$3.50 for an espresso, in less affluent nations there were food riots.

In Bangladesh the price of a loaf of bread increased by 100 per cent, a two kilogram bag of rice now accounted for half of a poor family's daily income. Bangladeshis took to the streets in protests that turned violent as they demanded their government do something to make basic food more affordable. There was rioting too in Egypt, Mozambique and in Haiti where a 50 per cent increase in the cost of rice, beans and fruit led to angry demonstrations in which at least four people died and which forced the resignation of the Prime Minister.

"In many developing countries they have been replacing food crops with biofuel crops in an attempt to earn cash," explains Gleeson. "It's also meant the destruction of rainforests in places like Indonesia and Brazil in favour of palm oil plantations—biofuel plantations instead of food—all driven by the wealthy countries."

Biofuel production, along with the drought, has also had a significant effect on food production and prices in Australia. Ben Fargher, Chief Executive Officer of the National Farmers Federation, says it comes down to supply-and-demand. "The demand for food is extremely high globally. We've seen crop production diverted for biofuel and we've seen drought globally, not just in Australia, so supply has been down."

Ethanol production as a way of reducing oil consumption has come in for some criticism in the past few years. Global ethanol production was projected to exceed 77 billion litres in 2008, a more than 20 per cent increase on the previous year. In late 2007, the UN's special rapporteur on the right to food, Jean Ziegler, called for a five-year ban on the expansion of biofuel production and described the use of arable land for ethanol instead of food crops as "a crime against humanity".

In Australia, some state governments have moved to increase the amount of ethanol

Australia it is hard to believe that at least a third of Aboriginal people for at least part of the year don't know where the next meal is coming from. The cost of healthy food in a remote community can be anywhere from a third to 50 per cent higher than urban communities so affordability is an issue, but it's often just not there anyway, and if it is there it's not necessarily very fresh." As a result, Hewitt says, junk food is both cheaper and easier to access.

Affordability and availability of fresh, healthy food may soon be a more significant problem in our big cities as well. According to Griffith's Professor Brendan Gleeson, the current lower fuel and food prices won't last. "In places like Brisbane we will see some tempering in the rise of prices of fruit and vegetables, but the long-term outlook in terms of climate change is very concerning because crop failure in traditional bread-basket places like Australia is now a major contributor to the world food shortage problem. We have to be very, very concerned."

"The spike in food prices was the product of a bit of a perfect storm."

PROFESSOR BRENDAN GLEESON

in our petrol; the Queensland Government's 5 per cent target by next year is expected to divert 10 per cent of the state's grain crop with the rest to come from sugarcane, while in NSW analysts estimate more than 20 per cent of the state's grain production will be required to produce the mandated E10 fuel. The Australian Lot Feeders Association says as a result, feed grain prices will rise 25 per cent nationally over the next two years. Those costs will inevitably be passed on to consumers in the form of higher meat prices.

But Queensland National Party Senator Barnaby Joyce argues that with emerging technologies, food and biofuel production need not be an either or scenario. "We are looking at second-generation biofuels that give us capacity to take the grain off the crop and use what's left—the chaff—in the biofuels. There's immense capacity for both fuel and food to work together."

The increasing cost of food isn't only leading to malnutrition in countries like Bangladesh and Haiti, but here in Australia as well. Claire Hewitt from the Dieticians Association of Australia says it's a major problem in many local Indigenous communities. "In a wealthy country like

The UN's Food and Agriculture Office says that more than 850 million people in the world today suffer from severe hunger and chronic malnutrition. In early 2009 at a UN Food Summit in Madrid, the UK-based charity Oxfam warned the global economic crisis could add hundreds of millions more to the list of those going hungry. For many of those people, if nothing is done, it is just a matter of time before any number of diseases take hold of their weakened immune systems and end their lives prematurely. Around six million children will die this year simply because they can't access the basic nutrients they need to stay alive.

For millions of other children in comparatively rich nations like Australia, while their diets may be high in calories, they too face a life shortened by disease; not cholera or malaria, but dietary-related conditions like diabetes and heart disease. While the food crisis may now be particularly acute in the developing world and in remote Indigenous communities where healthy fresh food is prohibitively expensive, it is evident too in our middle class suburbs where the rate of childhood obesity continues to rise. ■

*John Barron is an ABC journalist. His book *Note for Me!* about the 2008 US Presidential election was published late last year.*

AN ORGANIC SOLUTION?



One way of getting cheaper fresh fruit and vegetables which doesn't require expensive long-distance transportation, is from organic community gardens. The best-known is probably Brisbane's Northey Street City Farm, established by volunteers on council land in 1994. Councillor Helen Abrahams was involved with setting up Northey and remains a supporter: "The social benefits are very strong ... and as times get tough you can augment the veggie shopping with smaller quantities of things like carrots and shallots than you can buy at shops."

There are significant social and nutritional benefits emerging from the Garden Space @ Griffith as well. "It started as a research and teaching exercise, but really took off, including a greenhouse and a playground," says Griffith University nutritionist Dr Shawn Somerset. The two hectare garden at Logan Campus has been adopted by African migrants who are growing crops such as cassava, maize and a variety of beans that are hard to find in Australian shops. Somerset says as well as being an important cultural expression, it may help combat the higher rates of obesity found in migrants who are born in circumstances where under-nutrition is common, and who become more prone to illnesses including diabetes when they switch to a high-fat, high-calorie diet, just as Indigenous people are.



ANIMAL LORE

Will animal rights be the next great social justice movement?

LYNNE BLUNDELL REPORTS

PHOTOGRAPHY **CHRIS STACEY**

The human/animal relationship has always been fraught with contradiction and inconsistency; through the ages we have fluctuated between revering and protecting animals and exploiting them mercilessly. Animals are our companions; they are also our medical research fodder and our food. But, at a time when all species face new challenges from a warming planet, there is a groundswell of support for animals, with educators and lawyers joining forces with animal welfare groups, philosophers and ethicists.

“It is an idea whose time has come. Animal welfare is next on the list.”

PROFESSOR DAVID WEISBROT

This groundswell is apparent in the sharp rise in the number of animal law courses on offer at leading universities around the world. At the legislative level, practices such as battery farming of hens and the use of restrictive sow pens for pigs are increasingly being banned. Consumer backlash is also forcing change. In the UK the country's largest supermarket chain, Sainsburys, has banned eggs produced by battery hens. Other UK retailers to have already imposed such a ban include Marks & Spencer, Waitrose and the Co-op.

So what does all this mean? Is it just a fad or is it a sign that we are becoming more compassionate towards non-human animals? Professor David Weisbrot, president of the Australian Law Reform Commission, believes animal welfare and animal rights is likely to be the next great social justice movement. He describes its rise as a perfect example of zeitgeist—the simultaneous appearance of an idea.

"It is an idea whose time has come," says Weisbrot. "As we tackle social justice issues such as racial and sexual discrimination, and environmental action is well entrenched, we look at other areas and ask 'what else will we be ashamed of in 20 to 30 years?' Animal welfare is next on the list."

Weisbrot believes the awareness of the plight of animals stems from the same roots as environmental consciousness. As more people choose to eat organic and free-range food, questions are raised about methods of production. Australia, however, has been slow to match consumer demands with an overhaul of animal cruelty laws and labelling regulations, allowing legal loopholes to protect the agricultural industry from real change.

"It is the classic Australian thing—animal welfare law is a state and territory matter. There are similarities in the Animal Welfare Act across the country and they say all the right things but in reality there are gigantic loopholes you could literally drive a tractor-trailer through. This allows practices to continue in factory farming that most Australians would not agree with. The law should reflect community attitudes but in practice at the moment it does not," Weisbrot says.

A major deterrent to progress is economic interest.

"Classically we are a nation that grew up on the sheep's back and that still has a hold. We will continue to rely to some extent on agricultural products but we have to become cleverer and move with community attitudes. It is counterproductive not to promote animal welfare."

The repercussions of ignoring community attitudes are product bans. A well-known example is the global banning of Australian wool products by major retailers and manufacturers following anti-mulesing protests by animal rights organisation PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals). As a result the wool industry was forced to agree to phase out mulesing (surgical removal of strips of wool-bearing skin from around the buttocks of sheep) by 2010.

In Australia, one of the most influential animal protection organisations to emerge in recent years is Voiceless. A non-profit organisation, Voiceless was founded in 2004 by philanthropist Brian Sherman and his daughter Ondine. Through its grants system it has funded numerous education and research programs across the country. And it has brought together a powerful network of barristers, solicitors, law graduates and law students.

Through its law arm and its law series, Voiceless has brought leading animal lawyers from around the world to address Australian law schools. Legal counsel for Voiceless, Katrina Sharman, believes the role of Voiceless is to raise awareness of animal rights on many fronts, including pushing the legal envelope.

"The inhumane treatment of millions of animals has become institutionalised and within the law. A veil of secrecy operates to prevent the community from knowing about the situation of so many animals. But people want to know and lawyers need to think about how they can push these issues. The next area for change must be in laws governing food labelling," says Sharman.

"A veil of secrecy operates to prevent the community from knowing about the situation of so many animals."

KATRINA SHARMAN

"If Australia is serious about giving consumers choice there has to be uniform national labelling regulation. At the moment, labelling serves to confuse consumers with claims such as 'farm fresh' and visuals of chickens carrying baskets of eggs. We are behind in both labelling and in factory farm practices. Where other countries are phasing out battery farming and sow pens for pigs, Australian authorities continue to endorse battery hens spending their lives in a mere beer coaster of space and condemn pregnant pigs to live in sow stalls where they can neither turn around nor have physical contact with other pigs."

Sharman believes that despite the obstacles change is on the way. "In the next five years we will see continuing growth in awareness and pressure from consumers for change."

Some of that change will come through the education system. One project, undertaken jointly by Griffith University, Education Queensland, the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries Animal Welfare Unit, the RSPCA and the Animal Welfare League in 2006, aimed to help young people develop a culture of caring and compassion for animals as well as for the environment.

Called Learning to Care, Education for Compassion, the project was a recipient of a Voiceless grant and was headed by Dr Gail Tulloch from Griffith University's Key Centre for Ethics, Law, Justice and Governance. It involved surveying attitudes in a range of schools in urban Queensland.

There were a few surprises in the results.

"The attitudes we encountered no doubt reflect those of the wider community," says Tulloch. "People's attitudes differed according to age, with younger people showing more compassion towards animals than

older people; girls were more compassionate than boys, on the whole, and those in science subjects were harder nosed, particularly the teachers."

Both teachers and students identified considerable gaps in their knowledge about animal ethics.

"Most teachers face problems in teaching their students to care for animals due to their own lack of knowledge of animal welfare and animal rights issues," says Tulloch.

"In an education system that prizes knowledge over values, they lack the skills to deal with the ethical nature of such values in a caring and professional way.

"There is also a severe lack of teaching materials and training opportunities for teachers."

The project, along with other collaborative ventures occurring nationwide, aims to address some of these issues. Gail Tulloch says there are grounds for optimism on all fronts.

"There is a groundswell of change at the theoretical/philosophical, legal, curriculum, consumer and media fronts. Hopefully they are all intersecting." □

Lynne Blundell is a freelance writer and journalist who writes about finance, health and current affairs. She has written for leading publications including BRW and Property Australia.

ANIMAL LAW COMES OF AGE

The number of animal law courses around the world has increased dramatically in the past few years. In the US there are now more than 90 animal law courses, while in Australia animal law will be taught at 10 universities by the end of 2009.

In addition, the number of books and journals on animal law is on the rise. Steven White, a lecturer at Griffith Law School, says that considering the first Australian animal

law course only appeared in 2005, the growth is significant.

At Griffith University the animal law course has been run as part of the summer school for the past three years, with numbers of students growing each year. According to White, the response to the course, both indirect and direct, is unprecedented in his experience of teaching law.

"One of the most common responses from students during and after the course was that they were completely unaware of

the way in which law selectively protects the interests of animals, depending on whether the animal is a companion animal, research animal, farmed animal and so on," White says.

Many students indicated that the way they think about animals had changed as a result of the course. For some this change was quite profound.

But, says White, while the growth in university courses gives animal law greater legitimacy, lasting change in attitudes is more likely to occur if animal ethics is taught at an early age.

RUNNING THE NUMBERS

AN AMERICAN SELF-PORTRAIT

BY CHRIS JORDAN

Running the Numbers looks at contemporary American culture through the austere lens of statistics. Each image portrays a specific quantity of something. My hope is that images representing these quantities might have a different effect than the raw numbers alone, such as we find daily in articles and books. Statistics can feel abstract and anaesthetising, making it difficult to connect with and make meaning of 3.6 million SUV sales in one year, for example, or 2.3 million Americans in prison, or 32,000 breast augmentation surgeries in the US every month.

This project visually examines these vast and bizarre measures of our society, in large intricately detailed prints assembled from thousands of smaller photographs. Employing themes such as the near versus the far, and the one versus the many, I hope to raise some questions about the roles and responsibilities of the individual in a society that is increasingly enormous, incomprehensible, and overwhelming.



Light Bulbs, 2008

72x96"

Depicts 320,000 light bulbs, equal to the number of kilowatt hours of electricity wasted in the United States every minute from inefficient residential electricity usage (inefficient wiring, computers in sleep mode, etc.).

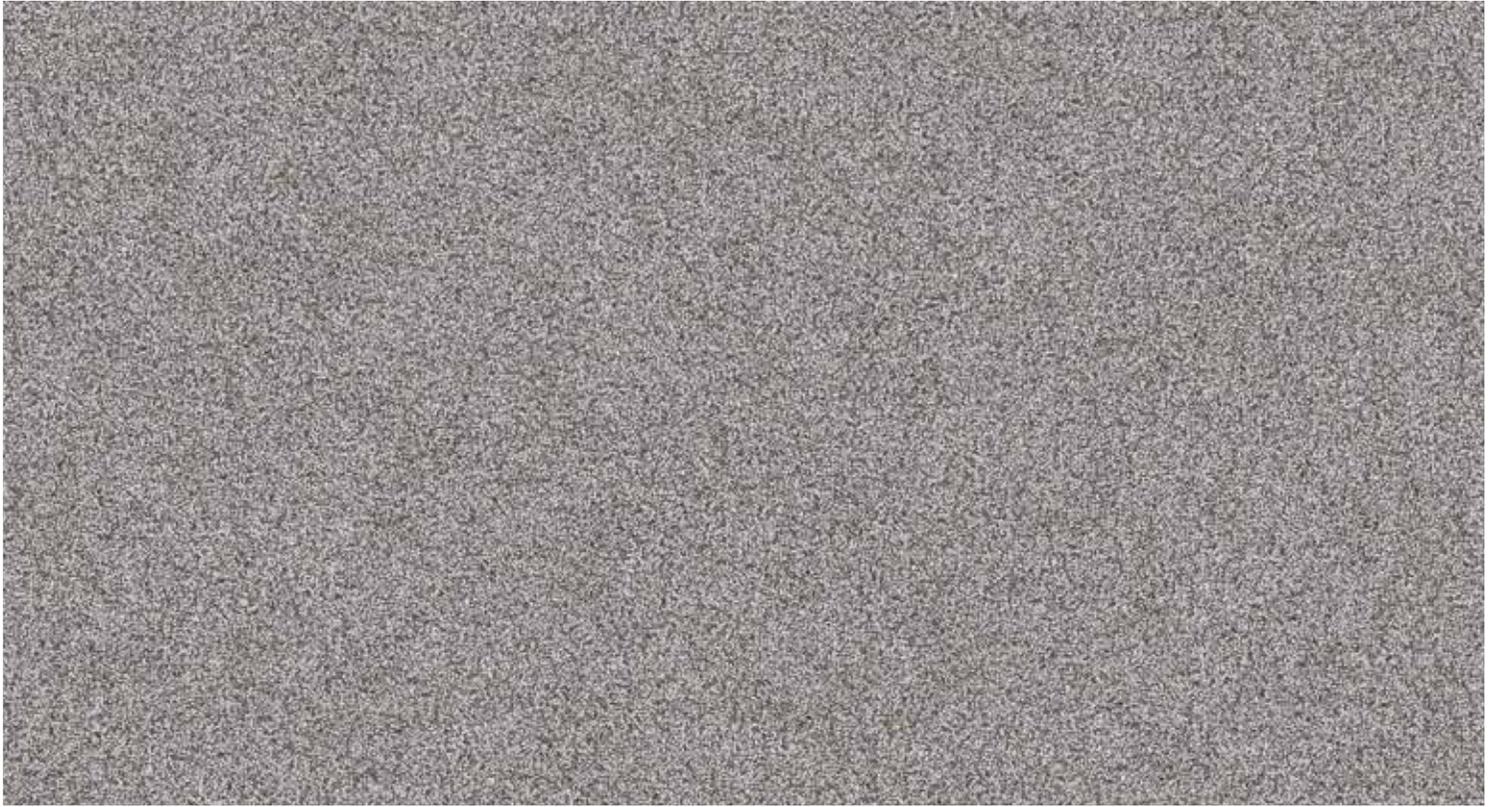


Barbie Dolls, 2008

60x80"

Depicts 32,000 Barbies, equal to the number of elective breast augmentation surgeries performed monthly in the US in 2006.

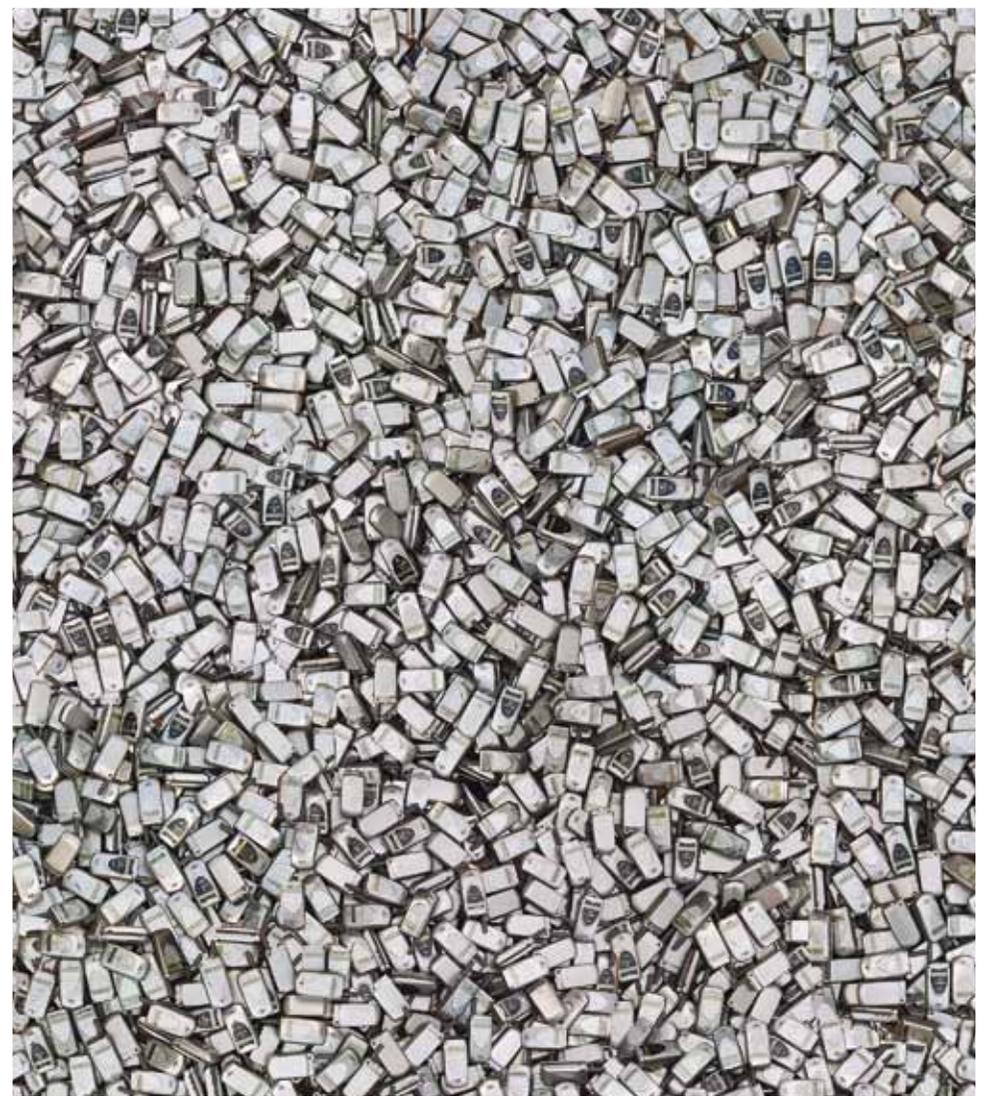




Cell Phones, 2007

60x100"

Depicts 426,000 cell phones,
equal to the number of cell phones
retired in the US every day.

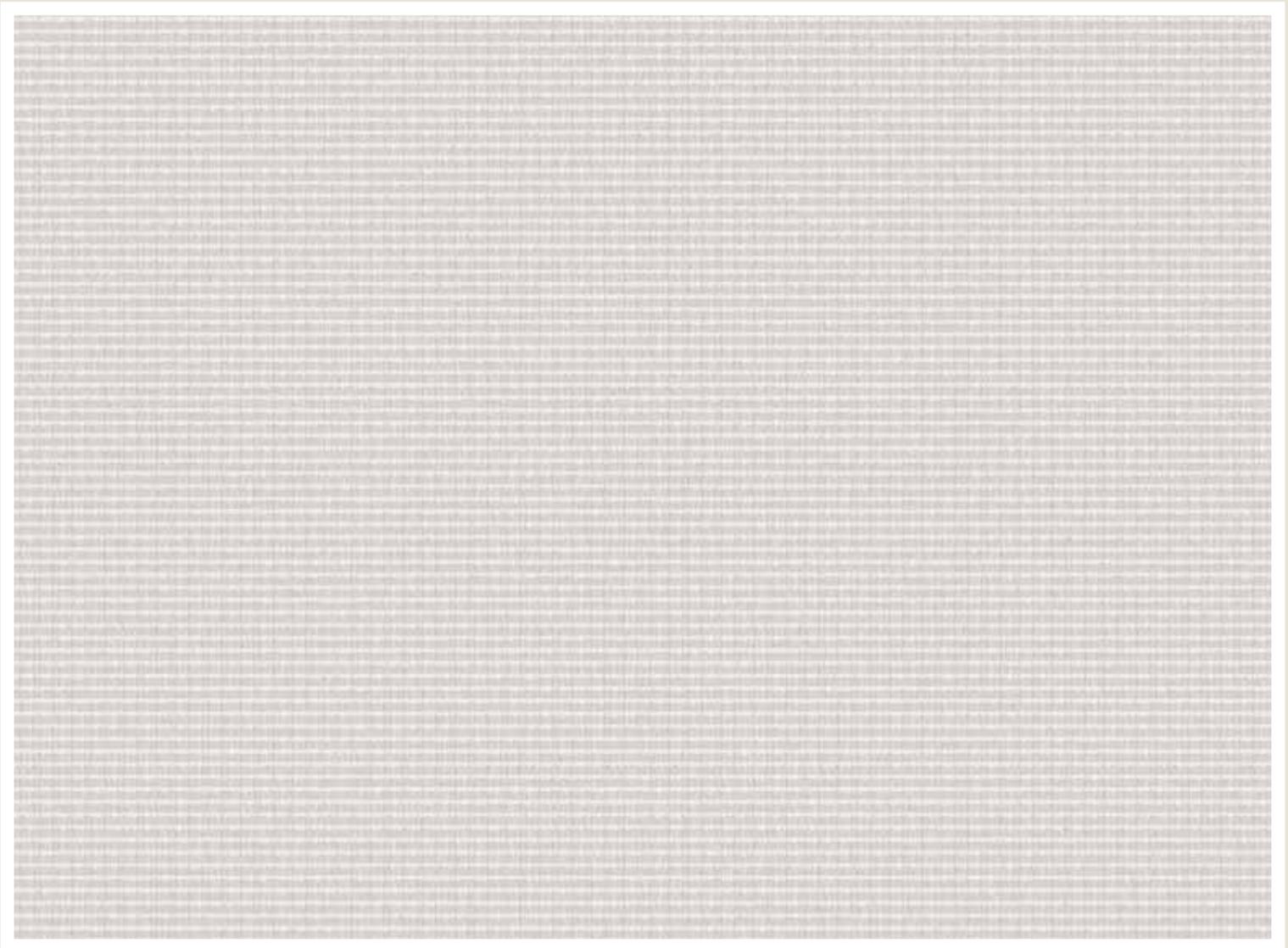




Cigarettes, 2007

60x82"

Depicts 65,000 cigarettes, equal to the number of American teenagers under age eighteen who become addicted to cigarettes every month.





Handguns, 2007

60x92"

Depicts 29,569 handguns, equal to the number of gun-related deaths in the US in 2004.





Paper Bags, 2007

60x80"

Depicts 1.14 million brown paper supermarket bags, the number used in the US every hour.

World-renowned photographer and environmental activist Chris Jordan recently discussed *Running the Numbers* and his journey of discovery through art at the Ideas Festival in Brisbane. Griffith University was the major sponsor of the 2009 Ideas Festival. www.ideasfestival.com.au

IMAGINE THIS.

YOU ARE A YOUNG STUDENT AND
THE SOUND OF A FAN ROOMS
AWAY IS LIKE AN ELECTRIC SAW IN
YOUR HEAD, THE NORMAL LIGHTS
SO BRIGHT YOUR HEAD IS GOING
TO SPLIT, THE TEACHER'S WORDS
JUST A DISTANT ROAR THAT MEANS
NOTHING AND YOUR BODY CAN'T
FEEL WHERE IT BEGINS OR ENDS
SO YOU FIND IT EXCRUCIATING,
IMPOSSIBLE TO SIT STILL OR DOWN.

THE PEN OR PENCIL YOU HOLD
MAY SEEM LIKE BROKEN GLASS,
THE PAPER ON WHICH YOU SEEK
TO WRITE BLINDING, WHILE THE
ORDINARY ODOURS OF LIFE
MIGHT AT TIMES BE PUNGENT
AND NAUSEOUS.

HOW WOULD YOU FARE
UNDERTAKING THE TASK
OF LEARNING IF YOU WERE
AFFLICTED WITH JUST ONE SUCH
SENSORY NIGHTMARE?

HOW WOULD YOU FARE,
IF YOU HAD AUTISM?

The Rudd Government last year announced a \$190 million funding package called Helping Children with Autism. The money will go towards early intervention services for children from birth to age six years, and education and support for families and carers of children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

It is the first time money of this type has been provided by government to autism sufferers and their families, so it's an historic moment of generosity, but is it enough and will it be well spent?

It is, too, a long overdue recognition of relatively recent Australian research that shows instead of perhaps one in 10,000 facing a life with autism, it's actually one in 160, and they all have the right to go to school, the right to receive the best education we can give them.

At a training workshop for people who dealt with, or taught kids with ASD, participants tried an experiment to help them understand just a little of what it would be like.

They were set reasonably complex tasks then bombarded with a variety of audio and sensory disruptions.

The responses were illuminating. Some of the participants giggled, some got tense, aggravated or angry, one turned her chair away to put her back to the class and simply refused to be involved.

Getting an education when you're autistic is no easy feat and unfortunately it's not just because of what's going on in your head or that people see the behaviour and not the child. It's also because we as a society have failed them and it's the failure of neglect.

Autism was first described by the American Dr Leo Kanner in the 1940s from the word auto meaning self, as in self-absorbed and cut off from the world. Similar findings were also made around the same time by Austrian paediatrician Hans Asperger.

Prior to these classifications it was sometimes described as childhood schizophrenia or seen as the result of the idiotic notion of the "cold" or "refrigerator" mother. As a result sufferers were often forced to endure the cruellest and unusual "treatments".

We still have no idea of its cause but it is a neurological developmental disorder for which there is no known cure, but early intervention and other strategies can bring about dramatic improvements in the skill sets of sufferers and in the quality of their lives.

In more recent times the word spectrum has been used because no two people with an Autism Spectrum Disorder are exactly alike.

**"ONE OF THE HARDEST THINGS IS
THE PHONE CALLS FROM FAMILIES
IN CRISIS THREATENING SUICIDE."**

FRANCES SCOLODERA

Children with ASDs may have deficits in behavioural, communication and social interaction skills and these characteristics may present in a variety of combinations and range along a continuum from mild to severe. Anxiety and depression also stalk their days.

All this, allied to the likelihood that it has a multi-gene cause, means it is an incredibly complex syndrome and as such poses great challenges for families and educators alike.

The key is early intervention and that requires early diagnosis and that in itself is no easy matter. Diagnosis is made on the basis of symptoms or core impairments such as communications, socialisation, and repetitive behaviour.



According to Associate Professor Deb Keen of Griffith University's Faculty of Education and the Griffith Institute for Educational Research, early intervention is important as it can prevent the child becoming locked into rituals and behaviour that take them from the world.

But what are the experts doing when they do get to intervene and help? According to Deb Keen: "We do have a good knowledge base of effective practices."

These are based on Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA) which is an approach that uses principles of behaviour first developed by B.F. Skinner. Ivar Lovaas developed his UCLA autism treatment model in the 1960s based on ABA and his work has been especially helpful to specific interventions for children with ASD.

The research findings are quite clear, Keen says. "While there are differing results, essentially this research has shown that children who receive at least 15 to 20 hours of 'good quality' intervention, such as educational and applied behaviour analysis, do best."

Keen recently received an Australian Research Council grant to investigate how best to engage children with autism in learning. She says one of the main obstacles to providing consistent, quality education to the community of autism is that: "there is simply not enough funding for the research that is needed."

While current knowledge and the strategies that flow from it can make a huge, positive impact on the lives of those with autism, that's only true if the help gets to them.

Unfortunately, eligibility doesn't mean a child can get in.

The fundamental problem is that the package does not increase capacity and in the three months since it started about the only things that have got bigger have been the demand and the queues.

Frances Scodellaro, Head of Outreach and Training at Autism Queensland, says the new funding simply will not help many families. "It's very, very sad to have to tell a parent, your child is not a priority, when to the parent that child is the only priority, when of course every child is and should be."

And so, it could be argued, what is the point of providing money for service utilisation when there are no services.

But what about our education system? After all, don't we have a policy of inclusion, the recognition of the right of every child to get the best education possible?

Yes we do, but more often than not they're just words on paper that only survive as action because of the efforts of individual teachers and school principals.

James Morton is a senior medical specialist and the father of a boy with autism. He's also the founder and director of AEIOU, a not-for-profit provider of autistic child care based on the principles of early intervention.

When asked about the experience of many parents trying to include their autistic kids into state schools he says: "Transition in state schools for kids with autism often proves the point. Many schools and therefore the department don't want to know and actively discourage family involvement, ignoring their expertise."

"THERE IS SIMPLY NOT ENOUGH FUNDING FOR THE RESEARCH THAT IS NEEDED."

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR DEB KEEN

The Federal Government funding package will provide the families of children from birth to age six, \$6000 per child, per year for two years for early intervention services and there will be 40 Autism Advisors nationwide to assist families and carers of children with the best advice. Six new autism specific child care centres will also be created as will 150 playgroups for children with ASD, their families and carers across Australia. Medicare will provide \$20.7 million for new autism specific Medicare items. Professional training for teachers and parent and carer workshops will receive \$23.3 million in new funding.

The Commonwealth Government claims: "An estimated 9000 children with an ASD will be eligible to receive this support before they go to school over the four years of the package."

The key educational question for most families is: "How am I going to keep my child in school?"

For many there is still no answer.

In the end it's not about money, it's about our kids. Perhaps our political leaders and bureaucrats should spend a day, just one day, answering the phone at an autistic service provider. Frances Scolodera explains: "One of the hardest things is the phone calls from families in crisis threatening suicide. Parents at the end of their tether fearful that they might hurt their child."

Surely, for our children's sake, we can do better than this. ■

David Margin is a freelance journalist and media consultant and father of three boys, one of whom, 12-year-old Nick, has Down Syndrome and ASD.

Griffith Annual Appeal



“A cure for avian flu and mutant flus will save millions of lives around the world, limiting deadly pandemics.”

Professor Mark von Itzstein, Director of Griffith University's Institute for Glycomics.



“Music transforms us all. To be recognised, appreciated and applauded for what we do in life has to be the essence of anyone's self respect and self worth.”

Jonathon Welch, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University alumnus, and Director of the Choir of Hard Knocks.



“Our research has shown that safe, simple vitamin supplements can banish crippling migraine for many sufferers.”

Professor Lyn Griffiths, Director Griffith University's Genomics Research Centre.



“Globalisation is a state of mind which sees all parts of the planet as the frontiers of possibility and enterprise.”

Professor Michael Wesley, Director Griffith Asia Institute speaking at the opening of the 2020 Summit, Canberra, 19 April 2008.

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HOW AUSTRALIANS CONSUME WATER HAS TO CHANGE IF WE ARE TO SURVIVE THE WATER WARS.

PHIL BROWN REPORTS

PHOTOGRAPHY CHRIS STACEY

TIPPING POINT

It is a sign of the times that the villain in the latest James Bond thriller, *Quantum of Solace*, wants to hold the world to ransom by controlling global water supplies. Never mind nukes or oil reserves, Dominic Greene (Mathieu Amalric) gambles that the most precious commodity of the 21st century will be H₂O.

The film's director, Marc Forster, described water as "the next huge problem I think humanity is going to face" and in his spy thriller the evil Greene plans to capitalise on this by siphoning off vast amounts of it and selling it back to desperate countries at highly inflated rates.

Sounds crazy? Not really. In fact there may even be some method in this madness. Professor Stuart Bunn of the Australian Rivers Institute (ARI), Griffith University, says selling water is not such a villainous idea at all.

"I'm convinced people take water for granted because they don't pay much for it," Bunn says. "Can you think of any other product that gets delivered to your door, guaranteed high quality, for around a dollar a tonne?"

Bunn leads Australia's largest group of university-based scientists specialising in river, catchment and coastal research and education.

He has spent years studying the impact of the water crisis, not only on river systems and habitats, but on urban communities throughout Australia. He claims Australians have suffered from a "Eurocentric" view of water for too long.

"For example, our pattern of urban water use has always been too high," Bunn says. "The idea that you could maintain usage of 300 to 400 litres of water a day for everyone is just not viable."

Meeting our water needs has often meant pillaging natural systems, rivers and lakes, which has led to their degradation.

" CAN YOU THINK OF ANY OTHER PRODUCT THAT GETS DELIVERED TO YOUR DOOR, GUARANTEED HIGH QUALITY FOR AROUND A DOLLAR A TONNE ?"

PROFESSOR STUART BUNN

"Freshwater systems are taking a hammering," Bunn says. "Rates of extinction are double what they are elsewhere. People have been warning of this situation for a long time and the crisis in the Murray-Darling system is typical but nothing gets done until you get to the tipping point. There was a realisation that things were going horribly wrong but it's only now anything is being done to avert disaster."

Governments are struggling to devise ways to rescue our river systems and to secure future urban water supplies for thirsty cities. A National Water Initiative has been drawn up by the Australian Government's National Water Commission representing a shared commitment by governments to increase the efficiency of Australia's water use, leading to greater certainty for investment and productivity, for rural and urban communities and for the environment. New dams, desalination plants, recycled water and a raft of water saving measures have been introduced, including tough water restrictions across the nation.

The Queensland Water Commission is one of the state bodies charged with the difficult task of grappling with what is turning out to be the issue of the age. It has devised a \$9 billion infrastructure plan that includes dams (including the controversial, now stalled, dam at Traveston Crossing near Gympie), a desalination plant on the Gold Coast, a recycled water regimen and other measures.

Queensland Water Commission CEO, John Bradley, says the commission has devised an integrated response. "The \$9 billion water grid uses a portfolio approach but as well as the major infrastructure demand management is very important," Bradley says. "There has been a major communication campaign aimed at getting consumption down and it has been working well."

The commission's original campaign Target 140, to bring consumption down to 140 litres per day, was a great success. Due to a wet spring and summer that was relaxed to Target 170 for South East Queensland where residents have not only reached the targets, but gone well below them at times.

"In early 2008 we saw consumption fall as low as 112 litres per day," Bradley says. "That's pretty impressive when you consider that previously it was more than 300 litres per day."

According to senior meteorologist for The Weather Channel, Richard Whitaker, the rainfall over eastern Australian has been decreasing since



“IN EARLY 2008 WE SAW CONSUMPTION FALL AS LOW AS 112 LITRES PER DAY.”

JOHN BRADLEY

1970, exacerbating our water woes. “Every capital city except Darwin has been on a decreasing trend,” Whitaker says. “Melbourne has had 12 years in a row of below average rainfall which is redefining what average is. For the west and parts of the north there has been an increase relative to normal. Climatologists tell us the weather is changing.”

Whitaker cites the fate of two Victorian lakes as stark evidence of this. “Lake Wendouree was a beautiful lake and it hosted the rowing and canoeing events during the 1956 Olympics,” Whitaker notes. “Now it’s dry. So is Lake Colac near Ballarat.”

While governments can do much the onus is also on individuals to pitch in and help and Bunn says Brisbane is a good example of a city that has mobilised people to save water.

“I think a key solution to our urban water problems will be demand management and that requires a philosophical change in the way we think about water,” he says. “The people of Brisbane have already proved that this can be done.”

Brisbane’s efforts at getting consumption well below 170 litres per day compares well with other cities. In Melbourne for example, in January 2008, water consumption was still above 200 litres per day.

Bunn contends people should also be prepared to drink recycled water, though winning the public over on this is more difficult. In a referendum in August, 2006, the city of Toowoomba notoriously rejected its council’s push to introduce recycled water. Scare campaigns labelled the city “Poowoomba”, which delighted the tabloid press but scared citizens into voting against the water plan.

“Even in Brisbane there has been a scurrilous campaign to discredit plans for introducing recycled water,” Bunn said. “Many of the people saying recycled water is unsafe have no expertise in the field. The public needs to be better informed—this is too important an issue.”

From being something we took for granted just a decade ago water has become a contentious issue, a hot topic that has governments around the world scrambling to catch up.

In light of this the antics of Dominic Greene, the Bond villain, don’t seem at all far-fetched. ■

Phil Brown is a Brisbane journalist and author. He is senior writer with the lifestyle magazine Brisbane News.

TROUBLE AT TRAVESTON

Queensland’s proposed Traveston Crossing Dam near Gympie is a flashpoint in the water wars, perhaps a harbinger of battles to come. Touted by the Queensland Government as a vital link in its \$9 billion water infrastructure program it is now a political liability with public opposition and major concerns about its environmental impact delaying the project for several years.

It was probably with a sense of relief that Queensland Premier Anna Bligh announced in November 2008 that the proposed dam would be delayed for several years while further environmental studies were undertaken.

Regardless of further studies and plans to mitigate Traveston’s impact on the environment the experts agree that, if built, it would threaten a number of species and, most significantly, be a disaster for one of the world’s rarest creatures, the Australian Lungfish, *Neoceratodus forsteri*.

Professor Angela Arthington, a research professor at the Australian Rivers Institute, Griffith University in Brisbane, who has spent years studying the Mary River, recently criticised the Environmental Impact Statement on Traveston Crossing Dam, especially impacts on the lungfish.

“The lungfish has been declared a vulnerable species by the Federal Government and that makes it a requirement to protect its natural habitat,” Arthington says. “The lungfish is only found naturally in the Mary and Burnett Rivers. The proposal to construct Traveston Crossing Dam on the free-flowing main channel of the upper Mary River could seriously threaten the lungfish by loss of breeding habitat. The dam could be stopped by Commonwealth legislation if important populations of lungfish in the Mary River are likely to be impacted by the new dam.”

With this in mind Queensland’s Co-ordinator General advised Premier Anna Bligh late in 2008 that the proposed dam was unlikely to receive Federal Government approval unless there was environmental rehabilitation of the site. Many believe the environmental hurdles are too great and the dam will never be built.

From Lahore to Tribeca

Donkey in Lahore has journeyed far from its roots at Griffith Film School in Brisbane.

ANDREW L. URBAN REPORTS

PHOTOGRAPHY **CHRIS STACEY**



"I made him repeat it, so I could hear it again, properly." FARAMARZ K-RAHBER

Faramarz K-Rahber was just arriving at the Griffith University South Bank campus when his mobile phone rang early one August evening in 2007. The caller said he wanted to tell him the good news: K-Rahber's documentary, *Donkey in Lahore*, had been accepted into competition in the festival—the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam, the Mecca of documentary festivals. K-Rahber laughed: "Who is this?" He thought it was a friend pulling his leg, knowing the film had been submitted. A joke, of course. But no, really! "I made him repeat it," K-Rahber says, "so I could hear it again, properly."

The call began a journey for *Donkey* that took the film from the heights of the documentary world to the Hollywood end of filmmaking at Robert De Niro's Tribeca 2008 festival in New York. The Tribeca screening not only showcased their film to the sophisticated New York crowd, K-Rahber and his business partner in Faraway Productions, and the film's editor, Axel Grigor, got to meet De Niro as well as actress Hilary Duff and

Tribeca judge Whoopie Goldberg.

But there wouldn't have been a Tribeca screening without the Amsterdam screening, which is where a Tribeca scout saw the film and earmarked it for New York. After the well-attended Tribeca screening, K-Rahber and Grigor were deluged with offers from sales companies to represent the film internationally, and they settled on New York-based The Film Sales Company, whose Andrew Herwitz "was so enthusiastic and excited" he won them over.

The deal was done after the two principals of Faraway Productions had discussed the offer with their investors: SBS and what was then

AXEL GRIGOR (LEFT) AND FARAMARZ K-RAHBER (RIGHT).

...via Amsterdam

the FFC (now Screen Australia) had jointly financed the film. So as Baz Luhrmann was putting the fictional Faraway Downs cattle station of his \$170 million feature, *Australia*, on the map, Faraway Productions was putting the \$310,000 *Donkey in Lahore* on the map.

K-Rahber had met the film's main subject, Brian, five years prior to filming beginning. He was immediately struck by Brian's great talent as a puppeteer and found his involvement in the Gothic sub-culture in Brisbane fascinating. The decision to film came in late 2002, when Brian suddenly revealed that he was converting to Islam (and changed his name to Aamir). He had met and fallen in love with Amber, a young Muslim woman in Pakistan during a trip there in 2000. He now intended to travel back to ask her parents for her hand in marriage. What happens when an Australian man with little knowledge of Pakistani culture suddenly turns up in Lahore with hopes of marrying a woman he barely knows? It's a long and tortuous cultural and personal journey, made more so by Brian's encroaching illness.

Grigor says the two work well together, despite—or perhaps because of—their different cultural backgrounds. Grigor is from Sweden, where he worked on Lukas Moodysson's Oscar-nominated *Show Me Love* before migrating to Australia in 1999. K-Rahber was born in Iran and his first area of film study was cinematography before he switched to directing and producing.

From the start, K-Rahber had made it clear to his friend Brian that during production, he would behave like a filmmaker, not as a friend. "I told him I would challenge him and that it was to be an observational documentary; no friendly favours." But the friendship survived and that's perhaps because *Donkey in Lahore* avoids judgements. "I tried very hard to resist the temptation to be judgemental," K-Rahber says.

Grigor and K-Rahber had already made the award winning *Fahimeh's Story* in 2004, as Griffith University students, as well as a 26-minute documentary, *Fair Dinkum Manjit*, in 2006, to help their personal cash-flow during production of *Donkey in Lahore*.

institutions here in the South Bank complex." McMenemy has also seen Grigor's work first-hand, when he edited an interview she conducted with Dr George Miller. "Axel is a meticulous editor and he knows how to tell a story; we needed a three and-a-half minute grab from the 40-minute interview for an opening function and he made it powerful and meaningful." That must have been great preparation for editing five years of shooting on *Donkey* down to 117 minutes.

On the *Donkey* shoot, K-Rahber says he learnt a great deal, "about life, for myself" as well as myriad details about filmmaking and troubleshooting on your own. "On the morning of the Islamic wedding, both my back-up audio cables broke down," he recalls. "I had to go to the backstreet bazaars and find someone who could help ... in my broken Urdu." But he did it.

The film was barely completed when it had its world premiere at the Brisbane International Film Festival in 2007, just before its breakout screening in Amsterdam. "We wanted to launch it in our home town," says Grigor.

"At Griffith you get to understand all the filmmaking crafts." AXEL GRIGOR

K-Rahber expected to take a maximum of three years to complete the film; it took five. "For five years I was on call ... I had to put my life on hold. I spent a lot of nights filming Aamir while he called Pakistan, usually finishing around 2 or 3am." But he never had any doubts about the project. "I wasn't expecting anything ... I was just observing, so whatever happened in the process was the story."

He and Grigor made a point of discussing every aspect in detail. "I didn't want to just drop the footage in his lap to edit," K-Rahber says.

"At Griffith you get to understand all the filmmaking crafts, all about the importance of pre-production, handling the camera, so on," says Grigor. "One of the best things about Griffith," adds K-Rahber, "is the freedom to develop your project without restrictions, but with supervision and guidance. It's a liberating environment." It is also a hothouse of cultural and creative energies, which is consciously harnessed by the university.

Marilyn McMenemy, Pro Vice Chancellor (Arts, Education and Law) at Griffith University says: "The Film School underlines the importance of students interacting with all the other arts, artists and cultural

Brian/Aamir was "brave to let me into his life with a camera," says K-Rahber. "Explaining it all to Amber and her family was another matter; at first it didn't make much sense to them so over the five-year period we had the conversation again and again. They were puzzled; who would want to see such a thing?" Now they know—everyone from Amsterdam to New York and everywhere in between. □

Andrew L. Urban is the publisher and editor of www.urbancinefile.com.au Australia's weekly online movie magazine, established in February 1997. He has been writing about film and filmmakers, for a variety of Australian and international publications, since 1985.

**GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY
ALUMNUS DR UMAR
ACHMADI SPEAKS TO
BARBARA BROOKS
ABOUT HIS CAREER
IN ENVIRONMENTAL
HEALTH.**



A WINDOW ON THE

Griffith University has a new Centre: the Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Development for Indonesia. Professor Umar Achmadi tells me how pleased he is to have been associated with the development of the centre. As an expert in the field of environmental health in Indonesia, and an Adjunct Professor of Public Health at Griffith, he has long been an advocate of the kind of collaborative work the centre will carry out, like education in sustainable development in Indonesia, research on climate change, and emergency technical consultancies. Umar Achmadi understood early in his career the importance of the connection between environment and health. He saw the interdependent relationships between public health and sustainability. It is a vital connection to make in a country like Indonesia.

In the 1980s, most people thought environmental health was about sanitation. “Few people in my country,” Umar Achmadi

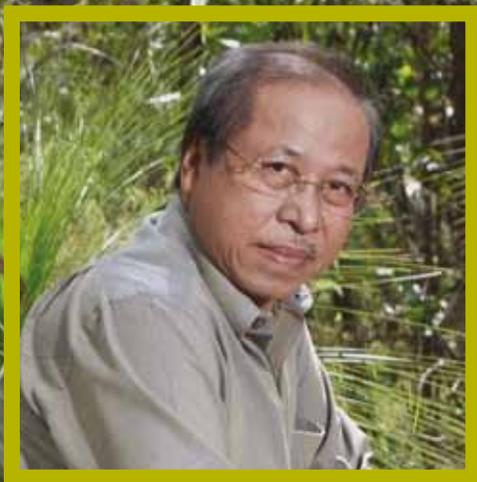
says, “understood the connection between deforestation and health, pesticides and health, pollution and health.” His research focused on environmental impacts on health, like the health of farm workers who use pesticides, the effects of air pollution in the cities on bus drivers and school children, and other occupational health issues. Very few people spoke up about these issues. Dr Achmadi did. As a result, he became the youngest professor in Indonesia. He has been a Professor of Public Health at the University of Indonesia since 1991. He was only 48 when he became a Director General in the Ministry of Health and was the Director General of Communicable Disease Control and Environmental Health from 1996 until 2005. As well as this, he was an adviser to the Ministry of Environment. His career spanned the terms of five presidents and four ministers of health, and survived the reform era. It was a challenging time: a period of social conflict, disasters like the tsunami in Aceh, and the emergence of new pandemics.

Avian flu, dengue fever, the tsunami, HIV/AIDS and the resurgence of malaria and TB: today most Australians are aware of these as health threats, some in our region, and some here in our country. Disease is global and it spreads quickly. Health authorities must manage local occurrences, stay aware of regional developments, and look to the world. Climate change is a global issue, in health as well as environmental planning. Models for co-operation have been established, joint projects set up, but there are still many battles to be won.

Achmadi studied in Indonesia, then the Philippines; medicine and a Masters in Public Health. In 1982 he came to Australia, to the School of Environmental Studies at Griffith University. It was one of the leading centres, he says. Griffith University had set up the first school of environmental studies in an Australian university in 1975. It offered an interdisciplinary approach and problem-solving methods in teaching. Achmadi spent a

**“I’m only doing a small thing,
but it’s a big field.”**

PROFESSOR UMAR ACHMADI



WORLD

year in Indonesia doing his research and two years at Griffith University writing it up. For his PhD, he examined the effects of pesticides on the health of Indonesian farm workers and possibilities of a collaborative response to these effects. At Griffith University, he found the academic environment stimulating and friendly. Arthur Brownlea, who was one of the founding professors, was his supervisor, and they formed a close relationship. He visits Professor Brownlea (now retired and unwell) and his wife regularly and in 2007 Achmadi took his family to visit the couple he calls his Australian parents.

After completing his PhD, Achmadi returned to Indonesia and became Deputy Rector for Research Affairs at the University of Indonesia. He maintained his connection with Griffith University, and set out to facilitate collaboration between researchers in Indonesia and Australia. One of his projects was to send students from the University of Indonesia to Griffith's School of Environmental Studies for short courses in public health, quarantine and epidemiology.

He connected the Indonesian government centre producing vaccines with research centres in Australian universities and the Queensland Institute for Medical Research. Today he is excited about work his colleagues at Griffith University are doing on the use of natural Australian remedies to combat life-threatening tropical diseases, in particular Dengue Hemorrhagic Fever, for which there is no known cure. He talks about the role of eastern Indonesia in a project to use the ocean as a carbon sink. Seagrasses, corals, mangroves all absorb carbon. "We must consult with and involve local communities for this project," he says.

Achmadi reflects on the challenges he has faced working in environmental health. It's always difficult to convince decision makers who have different priorities, then to allocate whatever funds become available. And of course, politics intervenes. Indonesia is a challenging place to work on issues of sustainable development. But he is optimistic. This work on environmental issues, public health strategies, and the research

collaborations he talks about, are relevant not only for Indonesia, but also for the whole Asia-Pacific region, and for developing countries all over the world. In 2008 he spoke to the World Congress on Environmental Health in Brisbane about the globalisation of emerging diseases, and the lessons learned in Indonesia. "I'm only doing a small thing," Achmadi says, "but it's a big field."

Achmadi visits Griffith University regularly. "It's hard to explain, but it feels like coming back to my hometown," he says. Rather than staying in a hotel in the city, he goes straight to the campus at Nathan and stays in one of the guesthouses. In the mornings he walks in the bush, among the birds and animals (and snakes!). He values the academic atmosphere at Griffith. He likes the convenience of access to the resources of the internet, the library and the infrastructure of the university. "Here I can see the world," he says, "this place gives me a window on the world." □

Barbara Brooks is a Sydney writer. She is working on a book about the verandas that link Queensland and India.



My View

HUIB SCHIPPERS
on Sustainable Futures for Music

PHOTOGRAPHY CHRIS STACEY

When I wake up, I go through my music collection to find the music I feel like hearing. It may be a Bach cantata, an old Van Morrison album, an Indian morning raga, or one of my favourite African popstars. When I drive to work, I can effortlessly flip channels between pop, rock, jazz, country, opera, and the Wiggles, depending on mood and company. My iPod extends and personalises the choice almost infinitely.

We take this musical diversity for granted, just as we can casually decide on Italian, Mexican, Thai or Lebanese food when we crave those tastes. The diversity of people, histories and cultures has led to a rich variety of sounds, styles and genres that can keep us exploring for more than a lifetime.

When you come to reflect on it, this is quite surprising. The engagement with music is one of the most universal activities of humans that does not have a direct link to our survival as a species (which explains why we breathe, eat, defend ourselves, and reproduce). Nobody ever died from music deprivation, yet we work and worship to music, dance and court to music,

make love and relax with music, rejoice and grieve with music.

With the developments in migration, travel and technology over the past 50 years (which in retrospect we will probably regard as the most significant period of musical change of the past two millennia), two important things have happened.

The first is that we have millions of pieces of music from all over the world at our fingertips. CDs, DVDs, downloadable sound files and YouTube offer a baffling choice of musics. It is good to remember that less than 300 years ago, Johann Sebastian Bach had to walk through the rain for two days (and almost lost his job) just to hear another organist, Buxtehude, in a German town not far from where he lived.

The other major effect is that with globalisation, a great number of “small musics” are being marginalised. Just as we can access music from Inner Mongolia and the Amazonian rain forest, Christian hymns, military bands and western pop music have entered ears in those regions, often pushed with considerable force by missionaries, colonial powers, and the—now rapidly collapsing—international music industry.

While musics have always emerged and disappeared through changing tastes or circumstances, some “small musics” are—in the words of my UCLA colleague Tony Seeger—“being disappeared” by non-musical influences and powers. That is causing a substantial

reduction in the diversity of music we can access and enjoy; now, and even more so in the future.

As an academic, it is very tempting to seek out such musics in need, so that they can be recorded and described for future generations. In that way, a picture of the musical sound and some knowledge of its context can be preserved. But it does not create a future for the living, breathing tradition, which has the power to engage, involve or excite people.

We are living in times when many music cultures are in a critical state for survival in terms of support, prestige, transmission processes and infrastructure. This is the time to work with communities across the world to empower them to forge musical futures on their own terms. The driving force behind this should not be nostalgia or neo-colonialism, but appreciation of the idea that, with a little effort, it is possible to negotiate ecologies of musical diversity in a globalised, mediatised world. ■

Professor Huib Schippers leads an international, five-year, \$4 million effort called Sustainable futures for music cultures: Towards an ecology of musical diversity, funded by the Australian Research Council. A charitable foundation to support the implementation of the project is in the process of being set up. For information: h.schippers@griffith.edu.au, www.griffith.edu.au/music/queensland-conservatorium-research-centre/research/signature-projects

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 dry mouth
 blurred vision
 constipation
 dizziness
 headache
 flu-like symptoms
 rash
 blurred vision



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 & cluster
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