Monash University’s Clayton campus is set to become one of the largest performing and creative arts centres in Victoria – second only to the Victorian Arts Centre in St Kilda Road.

When the new performing arts building is complete in August, the Clayton campus will have two new 250-seat auditoria – one for music and the other for drama – as well as ancillary rooms for rehearsals and storage.

These structures add to an already impressive array of facilities on campus, including the Alexander Theatre, the Robert Blackwood Hall, the Religious Centre and the Monash Gallery.

The combined facilities will come under the umbrella title of the Monash Arts Precinct.

Additional resources for the precinct are currently being considered, including a cinema, a bistro or restaurant and lounge areas.

An arts arcade under the main library may link these facilities.

The deputy vice-chancellor (academic projects) and chairman of the Performing and Creative Arts Committee, Professor Robert Pargetter, said the arts precinct concept was born about three years ago.

"The arts precinct will not only enrich the cultural life of staff and students, but also enhance the relationship between the university and the community," Professor Pargetter said.

Despite the incomplete state of the new building, the university’s focus on the arts will begin in full when the Melbourne Symphony performs the first of a four-concert series at the Robert Blackwood Hall in March.

The general manager of the symphony, Mr Steven Porter, says the orchestra is looking forward to returning to Monash after seven years and believes the precinct’s success is assured.

"This area is the demographic centre of Melbourne and an enormous number of people from the eastern and south-eastern suburbs will find an arts precinct centred at Monash far more accessible than the city," Mr Porter said. "They can also be assured that the standard of performance, be it in drama, dance or music, will equal anything on offer in the city."

In addition to the symphony series, more than 40 concerts and about 20 plays are planned on Clayton campus in 1994.

Monash is also expanding its performing and creative arts academic programs and its links with professional bodies, which will enhance its reputation as a complete arts centre with high-quality facilities, performers and performances.

The Department of Music has taken a dynamic new direction with the formation of the New Monash Orchestra and its closer links with the Victoria State Opera.

The department has received a huge response to its new Opera Performance and Conducting Course, which is available to Monash students or the public.

According to the Music department head Professor Margaret Kartomi, Clayton is a good place to develop Victoria’s second arts centre.

"City performances can play out here as well because Clayton has a different audience from the Victorian Arts Centre," she said.

In 1994 the English department will offer degree courses in drama and theatre and stage eight theatre productions.

The head of the Centre for Drama and Theatre Studies, Professor Peter Fitzpatrick, says the precinct is the beginning of a much more conspicuous relationship between the university and the community.

He believes that the Clayton campus produces more theatre than any other university campus in Victoria and says the new facilities will enable even broader theatre training for students.

Professor Pargetter said: "These building developments, together with the possibilities arising from the new facilities, will not only allow the university to develop greatly enhanced academic programs but also result in the university becoming the major provider of performing and creative arts outside Melbourne’s central business district."

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**INSIDE:**

2 Stress warning at Monash
3 Young scholar starts university
7 MONVOX: Have women achieved equality?
Report stresses health programs

Health promotion programs should be encouraged to reduce staff stress-related health and productivity problems at Monash University, according to a recently released study.

The survey of stress and health at Monash found that while anxiety, job stress, daily hassles and health levels were on average moderate, there were sizeable segments of staff population showing "disturbing scores" for all of these variables.

All staff of the university were sent a survey booklet during 1993 and 45 per cent completed it and returned it within seven months.

The study, conducted by Dr Chris Sharpley of the Centre for Stress Management and Research, found that job stress was "elevated" for about one-quarter of the 1925 respondents. Lack of feedback on performance was the most common reason for the stress.

Other reasons for work-related stress at Monash included lack of promotion opportunities, worry about amalgamations, lack of equipment and/or infrastructure support, and overwork.

Unhealthy effects

"Most of these factors can be addressed by Monash management," said Dr Sharpley.

"High job stress was found to be significantly and directly associated with anxiety, daily hassles, days absent, visits to medical practitioners, injuries, accidents and illnesses," he said. "Similarly, staff with high job stress rated their own health lower than staff with low levels of job stress."

Dr Sharpley said an entire department or unit can suffer as a result of one highly stressed staff member.

"While the onus for personal health primarily lies with the individual, evidence from organisation-wide health promotion programs clearly indicates that productivity is positively influenced by management-supported health initiatives aimed at physical and psychological fitness," Dr Sharpley said.

"Data from evaluations of health promotion programs in other places suggest a return of 25 per cent on every dollar invested by management in terms of reduced staff absence and medical treatment costs."

Dr Chris Sharpley.

Ninety-four staff rated their health as "bad" or "very bad", with 174 saying their health was "neither bad nor good".

"These people are most unlikely to be able to bring their best efforts to work or recreation, and represent a personal and management problem," Dr Sharpley said.

Some interesting comparative statistics resulted from the study. Male staff tended to be less anxious than females; Gippsland staff had slightly higher levels of anxiety, daily hassles and job stress than other campuses; the 31 to 40-year-old age group reported the most job stress and only minor differences were noted between full-time and part-time, temporary and permanent staff.

In concluding the study, Dr Sharpley said: "Monash's outstanding success as a research and teaching institution is often referred to and is certainly something of which all staff should be justifiably proud. However, if Monash is to remain at the present level of productivity or increase it, the type of commitment from management at all levels to introduce the sorts of staff-oriented thinking that has made other organisations in the corporate sector so successful needs to be made here."

"The Report of a Survey of Stress and Health at Monash University has been sent to all heads of departments. For further information, contact Dr Sharpley on ext 52868 or 55469."

NOW & THEN

25 YEARS AGO

The Foundation Stone of the Great Hall, now to be known as the Robert Blackwood Hall, was laid by the Minister of Education, Mr L. H. S. Thompson, on Monday, February 24.

15 YEARS AGO

Professor Louis Opit addressing a symposium in Auckland on 'Human resources in health care: Is medicine an art, a science or a business?''

"It is clear that in most Western societies we have reached the point where we consider every perceived disturbance of well-being in an individual as a need, or potential need, for medical services."

Professor Opit said that his message to those who demanded more doctors could best be summed up by a line written by the 17th Century Tuscan physician, Francesco Redi: "I often say that in this world the greatest foe of good health is the wish to feel better."

5 YEARS AGO

The Councils of Monash University and the Gippsland Institute of Advanced Education have agreed to the Gippsland Institute becoming an affiliated institute of the university.

This is the first step in an ongoing process whereby the Gippsland Institute, as the Gippsland University College, will become a constituent college of Monash University.

THIS MONTH LAST YEAR

Sir George Lashe, Chancellor of Monash since 1983, has not sought a further term this year.

A dinner at the Hyatt-on-Collins hotel last week paid tribute to his service to the university, spanning more than a decade. He was also a member of the Council from 1969 to 1974.
Early start in pursuit of excellence

A tertiary career with a difference begins this month when 13-year-old Selena Ng begins at Monash University's youngest scholar.

Selena, who could read a newspaper when she was two years old and recite meditative verse to her father, a doctor, at the age of seven, was awarded a special Monash scholars'hip to begin her secondary studies as an undergraduate scholar-in-mathematics and science.

At a presentation ceremony attended by Selena's family, the vice-chancellor, Professor Mal Logan, presented Selena with the scholars'hip, which provides $5000 each year for three years.

Selena, who hails from the Gippsland town of Newborough and has moved to Melbourne to study at Monash, says she feels no nervousness about her tertiary duties. "I've been dealing with people older than me for most of my life," she said.

After skipping several years of primary school, Selena entered Traralgon High School at nine years of age and tackled VCE last year at the age of 12.

She speaks fluent Chinese and Japanese, is qualified to teach the piano, holds a first-grade black belt in tae kwan do, and has won numerous prizes for music, debating and academic excellence.

Under a special scheme for gifted students, Selena will have a degree course designed for her, covering a broad range of subjects including mathematics, science, Japanese and Chinese languages, and music. She will also have help from an academic mentor and student mentor to help her adjust to university life.

But Selena is more familiar with the Clayton campus than most first-year undergraduates, having spent last summer on work experience with mathematics and science academics.

"I spent last summer on work experience at Monash working on pure mathematics," she said. "I was just doing things here and there, sitting down working my way through a few problems."

Professor Joe Monaghan, of the Faculty of Mathematics, said Selena was "well beyond her years."

"Selena can not only handle complicated mathematics, but also discuss non-scientific matters as comfortably as students twice her age," Professor Monaghan said.
The many faces of Don Thomson

When 26-year-old 'Jenny' visited her parents after her first psychology course, they told her he became depressed.

Bewildered by the claim, Jenny's father rang Monash University's head of Forensic Psychology, Dr Don Thomson.

Renowned as one of Australia's best forensic psychologists, Dr Thomson receives many such telephone calls.

"When the number of repressed memory claims, particularly relating to family sexual abuse, is on the rise in Australia, people are going into therapy because they have emotional problems, and while they are under therapy it's suggested that they may have been sexually abused as a child," he said. "When the patient goes away and thinks about it, they slowly, over time, begin to believe it."

"Often, people are very open to suggestion during therapy and feel better they have an 'answer', even when the claims have a severe impact on the family structure.

But Dr Thomson says therapists are "not in a position to make those claims".

"It's a prostitution of the profession," he said. "Whether you're a scientist, a clinician or any other professional person, you should limit yourself to the facts.""}

Repressed memory is just one of the highly topical issues in psychology being investigated by Dr Thomson and his students at Monash.

"Forensic psychology encompasses anything to do with people in the legal system - from victims of crime, defendants and prosecutors, the court system and the way it functions, and the treatment of offenders to how the community perceives crime," he said.

Dr Thomson has an unusually broad view of the issues because he is not only an academic overseeing the theoretical and practical training of 45 masters and six PhD students. He also conducts his own research, runs his own psychological practice and is a psychologist at the Royal Children's Hospital.

With this kind of experience, Dr Thomson is constantly being asked to give evidence in court cases and provide expert reports for the media and give professional opinion for cases.

He says the most difficult cases involve child sexual abuse because they usually involve one person's word against another's. In the adult world of the courts, there can also be problems with accepting a child as a witness.

As an example of these problems, Dr Thomson discussed a case where a six-year-old girl came home upset after spending the afternoon with her father. On inquiry by the mother, the girl said her dad hadn't paid her any attention, but rather that they were meant to be dialling his phone number.

"At any time I question a person about something they had experienced and then I ask them the same question a day or two later, they will probably remember a little less of the facts they remember may differ from those they recalled previously," he said. "This really is a very normal phenomenon."

"So although the child's story had mushroomed, this didn't necessarily mean that she was making it up."

On the basis of Dr Thomson's research, the court accepted that the child's story was true, and the father was asked to stand trial.

"Controversy has surrounded the issue of how old a child needs to be in order to be a reliable witness. Until recently, courts were required to establish the reliability of any witness under the age of 14."

Dr Don Thomson - the academic.

"The nine-zero prefix was agreed upon as there were no metropolitan numbers that had nine as their first number and zero as their second, so there was no possibility of ambiguity when the new eight-digit numbers were introduced," Mr Clarke said.

Number planning is no easy task according to Mr Clarke, and nor is introducing a Five-zero prefix. "The five-zero prefix was all weekend," he said. "On further investigation by the mother, the girl revealed that her dad had digitally penetrated her. At the end of the hearing into the case, the girl had claimed that not only had her father raped her on at least four occasions, but that her mother had also doctored her story to suit her own needs.

"Was the child remembering the facts as they happened, or was the child elaborating on the facts to suit her own needs?"

As well, he and Monash student Mr Paul Dietz are training Victorian police in questioning children. They are developing a technique that involves reconstructing the event in the child's mind. The child may be asked to close their eyes and visualise the event and then to describe what they see.

"The first and most important thing is to establish a rapport with the child, and the second thing is to operate at the same level as the child," he said.

The techniques are also being incorporated into police training programs throughout Australia, and Dr Thomson and Mr Dietz are currently trying to help police in Victoria in questioning children.

"It's nice to think that we've got a unique image because we're the only ones with a mobile number that starts with nine. But it was really just the end result of this fairly long, tortuous path to satisfy all the rules," Mr Clarke said.

The one prefix was unique because it was the only one that several metropolitan numbers had been allocated to other campuses and areas to have numbers beginning with nine.

"The new system was to have a single common prefix which gives the university a unified presence.

"With the expansion of the university, there needed to be a uniform phone system, and the main objective of the new system was to have a single common prefix for every campus followed by an unambiguous extension number for each department, faculty, area or individual.

"The university was rapidly running out of space in its existing number range and we couldn't expand into adjacent number blocks at Clayton or Caulfield because they had been allocated to other organisations.

Monash is the first in the metropolitan area to have numbers beginning with nine.

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Number planning is no easy task according to Mr Clarke, and nor is introducing a new telephone system for an organisation as large as Monash.

"We had to make sure that the old numbers worked and the new numbers worked, while at the same time making sure the migration from the old numbers to the new numbers was as smooth as possible," he said.

"The first two digits of the new numbers are uniform across all campuses, and the third digit indicates the area being called."

Eventually Monash 'borrowed' a prefix that had been set aside by Austel in readiness for the migration to the eight-digit telephone system in 1995. Nine-zero was decided on because it suited all partner requirements.

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Ten or more things to do during playtime at Monash

For Monash University’s new and not-so-new campus dwellers, the following lists prove there is much more to university life than lectures and tutorials.

On Caulfield campus:
- explore Monash’s creative side – works by ceramics students are on display in showcases on the 6th floor of B block;
- visit the STA branch in the union building to plan your next holiday – Vietnam is good at this time of year;
- have lunch in one of the newly landscaped recreational areas;
- play a game of pool in the union building;
- join the gym and have your fitness assessed (three-month membership: students $40; staff $60);
- play the pinies;
- shop at the supermarket opposite the union building – a great time-saver;
- have a cappuccino in the cafeteria – fluffy and hot, ideal for cold summer or winter days; or
- read the daily newspapers in the library.

On Clayton campus:
- try a visit to the anatomy museum – not for the faint-hearted;
- enjoy a gym circuit class at the Sports and Recreation Centre – warning: ‘no pain no gain’ is their motto ($2.30 per class, 1 pm daily);
- browse through the Monash Gallery – pictures of contemporary photographic practice and Sweet Damper and Gossip are the current exhibitions;
- eat a vegetarian or vegan meal at Wholefoods – good wholesome tucker that even carnivores will enjoy;
- take in a Theatresports performance on Tuesdays at 1 pm in the Union Theatre, or participate in a Theatresports workshop for beginners on Thursdays at 1 pm;
- listen to a CD of your choice in the John Medley Library;
- watch a video in the library’s audiovisual section;
- attend a music recital in the Music department – listings in Etcetera weekly.

On Gippsland campus:
- play tennis on the residence courts;
- sweat it out at the leisure centre, either in the pool or on the squash court;
- stroll around in the union building;
- practice your golf swing at the driving range;
- tone a few muscles at the gym;
- lounge around in the Union and watch television – ‘Days of Our Lives’ is still a favourite;
- pick an unexpecting partner to play pool with;
- buy some coloured pens at the stationery shop to brighten up pages of lecture notes;
- catch a band performance or join in the array of social and cultural activities on during the campus lunch hour;
- have a picnic in the rose garden.

On Parkville campus:
- visit the zoo – you’ll need to go off-campus to do this;
- plan an exotic dinner party and shop for the necessary fare at the Brunswick shopping centre;
- go for a stroll in the surrounding parks and gardens – a joy at any time of the year;
- watch a game of hockey at Victoria Park – for those who enjoy spectator sports;
- catch a tram to an unknown destination;
- play the pokies at Princess Park – an unknown treasure opposite the campus on Royal Parade;
- grab a bowl of pasta in Lygon Street, the ethnic heart of Melbourne;
- discover some bizarre and interesting facts in the CSIRO library;
- take a photograph – subject matter abounds wherever there are people, trees and buildings.
- eat hot donuts and browse through the Victoria Market.

On Peninsula campus:
- go to the beach – but don’t forget to slip, slop, slap, play tennis;
- stroll through the Porter’s Workshop, located at the back of building 9 – all works on display are by Monash ceramics students;
- play kick-to-kick football on the oval;
- watch a video in the library’s audiovisual section;
- visit the Course and Careers Centre and discover what new direction your future could take;
- shop at the Frankston Shopping Centre;
- watch television in the Union;
- take a leisurely stroll around the campus; or
- relax in the Union and listen to tunes on 3JJ.

“O” what a week!

Abseiling down the Clayton campus Main Library is just one of the bizarre activities students may find themselves sliding into during O-week this year.

More than 7000 new students are expected to take advantage of orientation week activities and ‘freebies’ before they hit the books on 28 February.

According to the Chairman of the Orientation Committee, Dr Ian Ward, O-week’s orientation week is the biggest to date in terms of activities and the level of involvement from all campuses.

The committee in conjunction with Clubs and Societies has organised masses of fun pursuits to help students meet new friends and become comfortable with the university environment.

A comedy night in the Student Union Bar and a wine and cheese tasting are just two of the activities planned on Caulfield campus.

Caulfield will hold ballroom dancing classes, Hobbit High Tea Dragon Flights (whatever they are), alldilo demonstrations and the AIDS information tent.

Peninsula, Gippsland and Parkville campuses will offer free barbecues, cruises, tours, bands and buskers.

And staff won’t be left out of the week’s events either. They can also join the various clubs and societies and will be involved in meeting and welcoming students into their courses.

In addition, official opening ceremonies will be held on each campus to welcome staff and students.

Dr Ward said planning for the fun-filled week began in April we were advertising for Host Scheme coordinators. “Dr Ward explained.

The Host Scheme, organised by the O-week Committee, is a mentor program that matches first-year students with second- and third-year students.

The hosts arrange tours of the campuses, nights out and weekend camps, and are available to answer any questions that first-timers may have.

Satisfaction high for DE students

Studying off-campus is intellectually stimulating and varies little from on-campus studies, according to the people who should know – distance education students.

In a recent survey by the Gippsland Region and Information Bank, distance education students revealed a high level of satisfaction with their courses, particularly in relation to the helpfulness of support staff.

Ninety-six per cent of students said they found their course intellectually stimulating, and 69 per cent chose to study additional material to that which was prescribed in the study guides or recommended reading.

The level of satisfaction with the mode of study was reflected in the high proportion of students – 44 per cent – who had collected information about higher degrees.

According to the director of the Distance Education Centre (DEC), Professor John Harris, 31 graduate degrees and diplomas are currently offered to off-campus students, with initiatives for new higher degree courses by distance education usually coming from the schools offering the subjects.

The survey will be thoroughly assessed by the Management Advisory Group of the DEC,” Professor Harris said. “We will examine all aspects of the findings and review the operating systems.

"In particular, we will look at the interactions of the DEC with academic staff and other pertinent areas such as enrolment procedures."

The average respondent to the survey was mature, employed and cited vocational advancement as the main reason for studying by distance education.

They said their studies had helped them reach set goals, at least to some extent, with 89 per cent of respondents stating that their studies had increased the range of things they could do or speak confidently about.

Respondents’ awareness and praise for distance education services provided by Monash was generally high.

However, personal and careers counselling and study skills services were less well known. Few students used these services, but those who did rated their usefulness highly.

Common difficulties experienced by the students included a lack of time, problems with self-motivation and discipline, and a poor understanding of the requirements and expectations of the courses.

Professor Harris said the centre would review not only what the students receive but also how they receive the information. “We are constantly striving to improve the information flow so that students better understand what their courses require of them,” he said.

MARCH 1994 MONTAGE 5
Research lets babies breathe easy

Newborn babies and children can now look forward to a healthier future, thanks to award-winning research by a Monash academic.

Dr Richard Harding, of the Department of Physiology, has won the medical faculty's Silver Jubilee Research Prize for his studies into the control of fetal lung growth.

The prize recognises Dr Harding's significant contribution to national and international research, particularly in providing an understanding of the role of fetal breathing movements in lung development.

The prize, valued at $2000, was established in March 1986 to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Faculty of Medicine. Dr Harding was awarded the prize at a special presentation in December.

Geoff Thorburn, who nominated Dr Harding for the award, said the research had led to a greater understanding of lung fluid dynamics and lung mechanics in the fetus.

"More recent work by Dr Harding has focused on the influence of a reduced amniotic fluid volume on fetal lung growth, and the effect that this has on breathing in the newborn," Dr Harding graduated PhD from the University of Melbourne. Later completing his PhD in neurophysiology at Edinburgh University, he continued his research with postdoctoral studies at Oxford University, where he first became interested in the developing respiratory system of mammals.

"It was always fascinated with the question of how the fetus adapts inside the uterus to a stage where it can live an independent existence," he said. "It must leave an aquatic environment where it is getting everything from its mother and adjust, within minutes, to living outside the womb—it must be able to breathe oxygen from the air, swallow, and break down food in its stomach."

Dr Harding joined Monash in 1981 as an NHMRC research fellow, becoming a senior research fellow in 1984 and later a senior lecturer. In 1991, he was appointed a principal research fellow and head in physiology.

He has published extensively in the field of fetal physiology, and has recently co-edited a textbook on fetal physiology with Professor Thorburn. The book will be published by Oxford University Press later this year.

Dr Harding and his colleagues have received a National SIDS Foundation grant to examine the possible link between oxygen deprivation in pregnancy and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). "There is strong evidence to suggest that fetal stress, often caused by smoking in pregnancy, can lead to breathing problems in the newborn, including asthma, SIDS and other respiratory difficulties," Dr Harding said.

Upholding Esperanto

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Russian academic Alexander Melnikov gave an interview on his favourite subject.

The resulting story's headline may have been extravagant but the implication was clear: "Esperanto first to make holes in Iron Curtain."

Esperanto now ranks among the world's top 150 languages—not a bad position, say critics, for a language that lacks either a cultural tradition, history or folklore.

But for a language whose exponents were evident to the linguistic mainstream. The 107-year-old language may not have attracted widespread international support (recent estimates put speakers at about one million), but numbers are unimportant, says Dr Melnikov, a recent visitor to the University's Faculty of Education.

Invented in 1887 by Polish linguist Dr Ludwik Zamenhof to help resolve tension between quarrelling ethnic groups, Esperanto's first adherents were strictly idealists.

"Originally, Esperanto gathered together those people who worried about mutual understanding and world peace," Dr Melnikov said. "This humanistic aim is still evident."

Dr Melnikov, an associate professor at the International Academy of Sciences, argues that Esperanto is the perfect second tongue.

"It is important for all spheres—political, economic and psychological. It is not only undemocratic to choose an ethnic-language, it is also a heavy burden," Dr Melnikov said.

"Esperanto, on the other hand, is easy to learn. Usually it takes between five to 10 times less than most languages.

"And if you study a national language, you are too connected to the culture, whereas Esperanto's horizon is much larger."

Today many Esperantists are also pragmatists, Dr Melnikov said.

"What is important is that it is that can be used to get in touch with other Esperantists. For instance, I have visited more than 20 countries—from Bulgaria to Japan to Hungary—and I use only Esperanto to get in touch with people there."

For further information on Esperanto in Victoria, contact Professor Alan Bishop on 9387 5272.

Languages receive $0.5 million boost

Monash University has pledged $500,000 annually to support Australia's largest overseas scholarship program for language students.

Under the new program, up to 15 language students will spend one semester at an overseas tertiary institution each year.

Monash will pay the return airfares and a substantial contribution towards living expenses for all graduates and fourth-year students taking a language course as part of any degree program, from arts to engineering and sciences.

All Graduate Diploma of Education language students are also eligible, as well as selected third-year students.

The head of German Studies, Professor Philip Zemmon, said the funding represented a major commitment by Monash to language education.

Monash currently teaches about 20 different languages, including German, Italian, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Greek, French and Russian, to students from almost every faculty in the university.

The university has a special strength in languages, which is "now moving to consolidate," Professor Thomsen said. "For the first time, an Australian university is moving to a situation in which it is taken for granted that senior language students undertake a semester of study abroad as part of their course."

"In Australia we have tended to blame long distances for not having a systematic study-abroad program, such as those offered in Britain and the US. The reality is that $500 will buy you an air ticket anywhere in the world and back. Given what we know about the quantum leap in linguistic proficiency that takes place during in-country study, this program can only be successful."
Women outperform men in bachelor courses

A study into student progress at Victorian tertiary institutions has revealed that women outperform men in nearly all fields of study.

Monash University's statistical services manager, Mr Ian Dobson, and Swinburne University's planning and information services manager, Dr Raj Sharma, based their research on the student progress unit (SPU), which is a ratio of the student load successfully completed to the total assessed student load.

The study, which included student load and enrolment records from Victoria's 10 largest tertiary institutions, focused only on the successful completion of undergraduate bachelor courses. The data was collected from the 1990 Department of Employment, Education and Training files.

The research found that in just about every area of study, women perform better than their male counterparts, even in fields considered to be male dominated such as engineering and science. This trend was consistent at all institutions examined.

To test the theory that women outperform men due to a larger representation in courses with high success rates such as humanities, SPU means for two groups of disciplines were generated.

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Quite surprisingly, the only discipline in which males received an overall higher SPU was social science, an area stereotyped as a female-oriented subject.

Males and females came in with equal SPU means in the health sciences (this does not include nursing, which was taught at a diploma level in 1990). Mr Dobson believes the "conventional wisdom-based hypothesis" that the academic performance of male and female students may be discipline related is rejected by the case study.

As conclusive as the results may seem, Mr Dobson says that given the data limitations the study should be regarded as exploratory in nature and suggests that further research into postgraduate studies needs to be done.

The study did not delve into reasons why women outperform men, but suggested that "if there have been any gender-related equal opportunity policies they seem to have been stunningly successful in terms of the academic success of women in bachelor courses".

Computer learning takes off

Medical and science students on Clayton campus will be the first to benefit from a new computer learning initiative.

Instead of learning from textbooks and practicals, new computer facilities will provide students with access to a range of images usually available only through slides, photographs, dissections and microscopes.

The Anatomy department's new Computer Laboratory has computer terminals that combine high quality pictures with anatomical and medical questions. Extensive interaction between a student and a computer program is required before the questions may be answered.

Students can choose topics from gross anatomy, radiology, histology (the study of cells) and neuroanatomy to sharpen their skills and further their understanding of complex anatomical structures.

The computer tests students' knowledge by asking questions, and if a wrong answer is entered, the user is given the option of a hint or the correct answer. At the end of the quiz, the student is given a score.

The interim chairman of the Anatomy department, Professor David Barkla, says the user-friendly programs provide optional tutorial sessions before each quiz and "help" sections throughout the activities.

"The possibility now exists for students to assess their progress in some aspects of anatomy themselves," Professor Barkla explained. "Eventually, students could have much of their assessment made using this medium."

"Students would log on to the system, complete the required sections, then log off. Their teachers would then check when they did the exercise, how long it took and what score they achieved."

"The anatomy programs are the most varied and advanced of any in Australia and have been keenly viewed by both interstate and overseas visitors."

The laboratory will be used by 450 first, second and third-year medical students and 200 second and third-year anatomy students. Students will have 24-hour access to the laboratory.

Third-year medical students Ms Georgiana Chin, Mr Andrew Cornith and Mr Zeer Duh designed most of the interactive teaching programs, with anatomical structures provided by radiologists Dr Nick Ferris (Alfred Hospital), Dr Phillip James (Monash Medical Centre), and Dr Malcolm Horse (director of the Neuroanatomy department, Monash Medical Centre).

The Faculty of Medicine, the Computer Centre, and the Department of Anatomy funded the project.

Have women achieved equality in Australia?

Ms Polly Morgan, science student, Clayton.

"In some ways they have and in some ways they haven't. Legally, we are supposed to be treated equally, and that is recognised by the law, but it is not always carried out in society."

Mr Max Murray, senior lecturer, Peninsula School of Arts.

"Not yet. The male hierarchy has to be battered down. I'm all for women having equal rights but they certainly don't have them now. I'm sure there are some areas now where women are being accepted as equals, but there's still a hard [battle] to fight."

Mr Andrew Bowler, chief executive, Transchrom Ltd, Caulfield.

"No. But, I think women now have the opportunity to achieve on an equal footing, whereas they didn't before. I do think it will take a number of generations for the simple reason that women are only now beginning to look for a career path."

Ms Angela Cronin, industrial design student, Caulfield.

"No, I think it's getting better. I think women find it really hard to get used to the idea of women as professionals, in general, and if they've been brought up a particular way it's very hard to change their attitudes."

Mr David Hison, part-time student and househusband, Peninsula.

"Probably not. I think it just takes time. They've certainly made inroads through education."

Mr Michael Maher, clerk, Union Information Desk, Clayton.

"Women still have a long way to go to achieve equality."

Ms Lisa Magrin, administration assistant, Marketing, Caulfield.

"No, definitely not. I think we're getting there, but I don't think we've achieved it yet. There are active industries that are very male-dominated, and I know from women that are in them, working situations have hard they've found it to be very very quickly."

Mr Bernie Eccles, gardener, Clayton.

"In some cases they have - like some of our lady politicians."

Ms Wendy Connaughton, supervisor of West End Cafe, Clayton.

"I wouldn't think so. Women don't even get the same wages as men, yet they work just as hard in some cases."
The culture of Australian sport

The attitude to sport in Australian tertiary institutions is cordial. Although sport is universally regarded as healthy and fulfilling, there has been a depreciating snobbery to it as an area worthy of academic study. Monash, like many universities, typifies this equivocation. On the one hand, it provides superb facilities for athletes and sportspersons - a fulminating pool, manicured playing fields and unlimited facilities for tennis and squash. On the other hand, there is no department of physical education or human movement.

Why is there this anti-intellectual attitude to sport? Surely sport embodies the creative spirit of the Australian identity more patently than any other facet of its culture. When I was travelling in India and Sri Lanka last year, I discovered that no one had ever heard of Paul Keating or Bob Hawke. Yet every single male human being (and a great many females) idolised Allan Border! Sir Donald Bradman is the Australian film cowboy.

I have been addicted to sport since I was in short pants. I have always read the back pages of a newspaper first, for pleasure. Now, however, I find myself justified in doing so for professional reasons, for there is invariably more law on the sports pages than in the whole of the rest of the newspapers. Sports law is a growing and entirely bona fide discipline. Sadly, Monash's Law School does not cater for it in its various, perhaps on the ground that it is allegedly not discrete enough to warrant the application of ordinary principles of mainstream law to a particular activity.

I dispute that. In my view, sports law is sui generis. The concept of contract of 'counterpart' trade which in a large measure has been developed and expanded by the many recent contracts on sport which have reached the courts. And the 'public interest' argument applicable to that doctrine, by which a restraint otherwise void might be justified, is comprehensible for sports lovers, who can appreciate the value of an even competition. The AFL draft, which seems at first sight a blank slate all new and untried, is being as a far-sighted device, rather than the devious clog on play discrimination in sport, and corporate liability. Before long, public interest, and cases are reported that never reach the press.

Several years ago I was ridiculed for making a prediction that a footballer would be prosecuted for a foul tackle. Yet that came true! I am now prepared to predict an assault on another bastion of legal immunity - the inviolability of players. When Merlyn Hampton was dismissed from the World Series matches in 1992-93, after performing in a sterling way in the test matches, on the famous basis that he was not a good 'one-day-cricketer', I consider that he might have sued the selectors. He must have lost a good deal of the match, and the 'public interest' argument would apply to this doctrine, by which a restraint otherwise void might be justified, as being a far-sighted device, rather than the devious clog on play discrimination in sport, and corporate liability.

To say that a man is a 'good one-day cricketer' is not damning with faint praise! It is condemning with strident damnation. If a man can star in the one-day codswallop that passes for it.

The present writer will have to give written reasons for their decisions, and base their decisions on computerised statistics. I should like to see a chair of sports studies set up at Monash University. There is now a fine body of excellent historical scholarship of sport being pursued in Australia, fostered by the admirable Australian Society of Sports History. The Oxford companion to Australian sport is a fine achievement of that society. And Ray Webster's History of Australian cricket is, in my view, the best book of its kind in the world - in many ways superior to Wisden.

I also believe that the longed-for Aboriginal 'reconciliation' is much more likely to be achieved by sportspersons than by politicians. Athletes like the delightfully unspoiled Kathy Freeman, whom I met in Canberra recently, have a tremendous responsibility in promoting the image of Aborigines. Kathy, in particular, seems to appreciate this, and I think is mature enough to carry the burden.

The current sad for non-competitive sport is misconception. It is human nature to seek to win.

National remedy Wellington’s calls for rural health

The future of rural Australians looks much healthier, thanks to a new national research centre led by Monash University.

A dynamic consortium of tertiary institutions will operate the National Rural Health Unit (NRHU) with $500,000 in annual funding pledged from federal and state governments.

The NRHU is Australia’s leading body for rural health research, operating as a national network of tertiary institutions and health professionals to meet the health and human resource needs of rural areas.

Central NRHU administration will be based at Monash’s Clonskeagh Centre for Public Health. Other offices will be set up in Alice Springs by the Menzies School of Health Research and in Wagga Wagga by Charles Sturt University.

Rural health experts from the universities of Western Australia and South Australia will also play leading roles in the new research centre.

Negotiations are also underway with institutions in Queensland and Tasmania, along with key research organisations across Australia.

The Federal Government will fund half of the NRHU’s costs, with the remainder shared by the states and territories. The unit has won strong support from health leaders, including the Victorian Health Minister, Mrs Marjorie Tehan.

"I am delighted that the nationwide consortium has won the right to base this innovative unit in country Victoria," Ms Tehan said.

"The NRHU recognises the importance of rural health needs and will enable the specific health concerns of people in country Australia to be better addressed.

The NRHU will offer a range of services to meet the needs of rural health professionals and communities, including training and education initiatives for the rural health workforce.

The director of the Monash Centre for Rural Health, Professor Roger Stratton, will be NRHU’s first management committee chairman.

As chairman, Professor Stratton will handle the day-to-day running of the unit, reporting to a steering committee set up by the Australian Health Minister’s Advisory Council (AHMAC). One of his first tasks will be to organise a conference of key players to develop a five-year strategy for the unit.

The announcement marks the beginning of an exciting era focused on improving the health of Australians living in rural and remote areas," Professor Stratton said.

"The winners wrote they deserved their recognition. The NRHU recognises the importance of rural health needs and will enable the specific health concerns of people in country Australia to be better addressed."

"To recharge my batteries after a busy year of teaching, research, attending conferences and visiting exotic destinations," Dr Andrew Goldsmith, Faculty of Law.

"Because my digestive system requires some delicate consideration following the abuse it receives from my own culinary handiwork." Ms Helen Dunne, University Secretary.

Ms Dunne wasn’t actually the scribe of this winning entry. A colleague, Ms Alison Dunseaman, had submitted the entry in her friend’s name. Does this mean that the entry is worth only an retirement?

Each winner receives a lunch for two at Wellington’s, which includes a two-course meal and a bottle of wine.