

campus news

University of Wollongong



Associate Professor Richard 'Bert' Roberts with the cover story from Nature in which he played a central role.

New dates set for earliest Australians

The University of Wollongong's School of Geosciences has played a key role in establishing new dates for the lives and times of the earliest Australians.

The cover story in the prestigious international journal, Nature, casts new light on Australia's record of human occupation and climatic change.

Associate Professor Richard 'Bert' Roberts of UOW's School of Geosciences was part of a multidisciplinary team from the University of Melbourne, the University of Adelaide, the Australian National University, CSIRO Division of Land and Water and the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service which combined to undertake detailed analyses of Ice Age environmental history and human occupation recorded in the shoreline sands of Lake Mungo in western NSW.

The new dates establish that the remains of Mungo Lady (Mungo 1), the world's oldest human cremation, previously thought to be about 30,000 years old, is in fact 10,000 years older. A mere 400 metres

further away, the remains of Mungo Man (Mungo 3), dated in 1999 by a team from the Australian National University to be as early as 62,000 years, are shown to be in error by 20,000 years.

Professor Roberts said the new dates indicate that both burials took place at the same time, 40,000 years ago (plus or minus 2,000 years).

And when was there the first sign of human presence? Professor Roberts said dating of adjacent sediments containing stone tools establishes that people were present at Mungo around 50,000 years ago, simultaneously with the earliest human occupation of northern and western Australia. No evidence of occupation at 60,000 years ago has yet been obtained at Lake Mungo.

The new data reveal that maximum human occupation of the lake-shore occurred between 45,000 and 42,000 years ago during, or just before, a phase of major climatic change.

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Campus News is produced for community, industry, government and other educational institutions as well as staff, students and graduates of the University of Wollongong. It provides an overview of University news and achievements on a quarterly basis.

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New dates set (continued)

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At 40,000 years ago, the onset of drier conditions resulted in drying of the lake and expansion of the southern deserts as recorded by the increase in desert dust deposited at Lake Mungo.

Professor Roberts said the new dates highlight Lake Mungo's unique record of the interaction between the lives of the earliest Australians and Ice Age climatic change.

"This rich tapestry of archaeological and environmental evidence is rarely equalled elsewhere in the world and provides an ancient example of humans being forced to adapt to severe drought conditions that affect much of semi-arid and arid Australia today."

The project was funded by a grant from the Commonwealth Department of Environment and Heritage with the support of the three traditional tribal groups of the Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area. Lake Mungo is the centrepiece of the Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area.

City Racer's US campaign

Lord Mayor of Wollongong Councillor Alex Darling continued his high-revving support for the UOW Steel City Racer, when he hosted a civic reception on 3 March for the team to wish it well for its trip to the United States.

The University of Wollongong has won the past two national Formula SAE-A championships – contested by engineering students from universities around Australia who design and build racing cars for a series of competitions based on design, engineering, speed, economy and endurance.

The UOW team will now take their Steel City Racer to Detroit for the world's biggest Formula SAE championships in May, in a bid to add international honours to their national title.

Cr Darling, who was on hand to wish the team well when Wollongong's world champion motor racer Wayne Gardner launched the Steel City Racer's national title bid last November, invited the team to join him at Wollongong City Council's headquarters for the launch of their international campaign.

Opinion

Supporting the next generation of school leaders

NSW has been fortunate with the quality of its school principals. But as PROFESSOR TERRY BURKE from the University of Wollongong's Australian Centre for Educational Leadership argues, action must be taken to ensure that good fortune continues:

NSW will soon be looking for a large number of new school principals, with many of the state's current school leaders reaching retirement age.

We've done very well with the quality of our school leaders, but we can't expect to continue to do as well unless we start putting resources into preparing and supporting the next generation of school leaders. We've been lucky, but we can't rely on that good luck continuing.

There are already disturbing signs that fewer people are applying to become school leaders. Some principals' jobs being advertised simply don't attract many candidates.

It is not hard to see why. It is an extremely complex and difficult job with wide responsibilities that can have an impact on the lifestyle of the principal.

Schools are unique organisations to lead and manage. There could be 1,000 students with a staff of 80. Consider these numbers in conjunction with the large numbers of goals that schools are expected to achieve – for every student, in many curriculum areas. These many goals are often long-term and difficult to measure.

Consider also the teaching and learning process which is very complex, involving the interaction of many teachers with many students – all with different strengths and needs.

In addition, these students are immature, perhaps going through adolescent development, sometimes becoming dysfunctional and alienated, and perhaps not wanting to be at school. For some their home life is not happy or settled. Schools are expected to pick up the pieces.

And of course society expects more and more from its schools. They are expected to pick up and "solve" other societal issues such as road safety, bike education, sex education and so on. Parents expect schools to do a lot more than when I was a principal.

Schools are very permeable to the community, and everyone has an opinion about how they



Professor Terry Burke

should be run – particularly the media. Principals need a working knowledge of the law, accounting, government policy, student welfare, human resources and personnel management. And that doesn't even touch on their core duty – providing teaching and learning for their students.

All these factors make school leadership a unique and very challenging job. But despite the complexity, the community generally doesn't give due recognition to the role of principals. They are not paid at a level that reflects the difficulty, importance and responsibility of their job. And perhaps most importantly, they receive no systematic, on-going training for the role they are expected to perform. There is no particular training requirement other than their teacher training, which many of them undertook 20 or more years ago.

As I said, despite these problems, we have somehow managed to have a strong core of school leaders in NSW. But the good luck is fast running out, good principals are retiring, and the problem of ensuring that the next generation of school leaders will be just as good must be faced.

The solution lies in mandatory training and accreditation for school leaders, to provide aspiring principals with the skills they need to meet the many challenges they face. They should be trained in everything from legal issues and accounting, to developing skills to motivate and manage people to produce the best results.

This training should be provided by a consortium of providers – the employers, universities and professional associations. Of course it is not just training – personal characteristics as well as professional capabilities are important. But we do need systematic, on-going training.

It should be based on the notion of a "spiral" curriculum, which caters for the acquisition of knowledge and skills of leadership at varying levels of leadership responsibility, from the classroom teacher up to the principal. And it should be linked to the awarding of an appropriate post-graduate qualification.



Port Kembla Copper chief executive Dr Motto Goto, Professor Gerard Sutton and Metal Manufacturers Kembla Products' head Murray Steele, pictured at the breakfast briefing.

University acknowledges sponsors' support

About 40 businesses, community groups and individuals attended the first Sponsors' Breakfast Briefing for 2003 at the University of Wollongong last month.

At the breakfast Vice-Chancellor Professor Gerard Sutton acknowledged the generous support of the sponsors and outlined major development initiatives at the University.

Professor Sutton said the support of the donors and the dedication of the University's staff had combined to help

target students of higher quality to Wollongong.

The Office of Development and Public Affairs has recently been established to allow the University to continue its long history of support, investment and partnerships.

Enquiries about the University's sponsorship and donor programs can be directed to the Office of Development and Public Affairs on (02) 4221 3169 or email uowdevelopment@uow.edu.au

New degree taps into missing link in IT field

IT graduates now entering the workforce can offer their employers programming and management skills. Very few IT graduates have any creative training, yet they are often asked to do creative tasks, such as the content design of web sites, CDs, and DVDs.

That situation is now about to change with the University of Wollongong offering what is believed to be the first IT degree in the country that integrates programming and creative training skills in one Multimedia curriculum.

"Production units that write multimedia software for media creation and presentation via the web, videos, education, computer games or interactive DVDs require employees that have appropriate creative and

technical skills," according to Associate Professor Phillip McKerrow, of the School of Information Technology and Computer Science.

Professor McKerrow said the new one-year degree (or part-time equivalent) was designed to provide IT graduates with the opportunity to develop skills in both these areas through training in multimedia programming and creation, and in the use of professional multimedia tools.

Subjects in the Master of Digital Multimedia will involve a creative component, a technical component, a skills component, and a practical component. Information about the course is available on the UOW website: www.uow.edu.au

Nobel Prize winner at electronic fibres conference

The world's leading experts in the field of electronic fibres, including a Nobel Prize winner and the inventor of the cochlear ear implant, participated in a three-day conference at the University of Wollongong recently.

About 10 overseas countries were represented at the conference conducted by UOW's Intelligent Polymer Research Institute (IPRI).

Nobel Prize winner, Professor Alan MacDiarmid, of the University of Pennsylvania and University of Texas as well as the inventor of the cochlear ear implant, Professor Graeme Clark, of the University of Melbourne, were among conference attendees.

Professor MacDiarmid won the Nobel Prize for the revolutionary discovery

that plastic can, after certain modifications, be made electrically conductive.

The conference focused on the latest breakthroughs and pending patents in the field of intelligent polymers.

Professor MacDiarmid presented two talks – one on "Conducting Polymers: Nanofibers and Electric Field Effects" and another informal address entitled "Young Scientists: the Engines of Creation for the 21st Century".

Dr John Madden from the University of British Columbia, Canada, presented "Super-textiles for the Super-human: Challenges and Possibilities".

Synthetic enzymes (that generate H₂), wearable fibre batteries, artificial muscle gloves, intelligent knee sleeves, and carbon nanotube fibres and polymers that convert sunlight into electricity are just some of the research projects emanating from the IPRI.



Nobel Prize winner, Professor Alan MacDiarmid (left); Director of the IPRI, Professor Gordon Wallace; and cochlear ear implant inventor, Professor Graeme Clark, pictured at the conference.





Chancellor opens Research Student Centre

The Chancellor of the University of Wollongong, Mr Michael Codd, AC, officially opened the Research Student Centre at the University of Wollongong on Friday 14 February.

The centre was established as an integral part of the strategic focus on higher degree students and provides a 'one-stop-shop' service centre for students and staff on all postgraduate research candidate matters. This includes enrolment matters, research

scholarships, thesis examination and student progress.

The centre sits under the umbrella of the Office of Research (Director Mr Aapo Skorulis) and is managed by Dr Lenore Lyons.

The Chancellor is pictured above officially opening the new Research Student Centre at the University with the centre manager, Dr Lyons, looking on.

Aboriginal Education Centre opens new premises

The new premises for the Aboriginal Education Centre was officially opened by Mr Colin Markham, MP, Member for Wollongong and Parliamentary Secretary for Aboriginal Affairs and the Illawarra on March 11.

The Aboriginal Education Centre (AEC) is involved in support, teaching, course development, research, tutoring programs and in Aboriginal community projects, and it currently has a staff of 10 people.

The AEC has developed an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Alternative Admissions Program, a specific Orientation Program, and is responsible for recruiting Indigenous students to the University. It has moved into teaching areas, including specific Aboriginal Education subjects in the

Faculty of Education, and in co-ordination of an Aboriginal Studies specialisation and delivery of the core subjects for that program within the Faculty of Arts.

A computer laboratory is available for students to type up assignments, access the Web and download information. Printing and photocopying facilities are also available.

A Student Lounge and an outside gas barbecue, in a leafy well-established garden area, are provided for informal get togethers.

Smith Family program eases the burden for students

The Smith Family's Chief Executive Officer, Ms Elaine Henry, and the Mayor of Wollongong, Cr Alex Darling, were among representatives attending the presentation of The Smith Family's Tertiary Scholarships awards held at the University of Wollongong.

The awards were made to two students to support them with their studies by assisting in areas such as the cost of textbooks, transport and accommodation.

They will also have access to a mentor from their chosen field of study who can provide academic, professional and personal support. This can include career advice, study tips, industry contacts or organising work experience and networking opportunities.

The Smith Family's Learning for Life program is providing educational support and financial assistance to more than 18,000 financially disadvantaged students from kindergarten to university throughout Australia.

Students receiving the awards often come from families in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven who have previously have had no access to the tertiary sector, and in some cases, even to high school.

The Regional Development Manager for The Smith Family, Ms Donna-Lee King, said studies had shown that students involved in the Learning for Life program consistently outperformed students at university who came from more privileged backgrounds.

She said the two students to receive the latest awards at UOW achieved high UAI marks in the Higher School Certificate so the financial awards will help ensure they are able to test their talents at university.



The Smith Family's Chief Executive Officer, Ms Elaine Henry, addresses the awards ceremony.

Water filter has benefits for developing countries



Dr Andrea Schafer and Environmental Engineering honours student Christian Remy demonstrate the water filter system.

A solar-powered water filter being tested at the University of Wollongong could be the solution to an age-old problem – transforming saline water, and contaminated ground water into safe drinking water.

The filter is the brainchild of UOW researcher Dr Andrea Schafer and Dr Bryce Richards from the University of New South Wales. It uses a novel, chemical-free, hybrid membrane process to remove contaminants from water. Previous membrane technologies relied on electricity – something that can be in short supply in remote communities – particularly with the current dry conditions. However, this unique system runs entirely on solar energy.

Current honours students from UOW are improving the system and performing fundamental trace

contaminant removal experiments, on the prototype, which was developed by students from UNSW.

The five UOW students have carried out extended field trials in remote Australian conditions and are working on transforming the prototype into a commercially viable unit.

Dr Schafer said that the system had clear benefits for developing countries where contaminated drinking water is a major cause of illness and death in the nation's poorest countries. She said they are currently speaking to prospective industry partners about partnership opportunities.

"The goal is to take the system into developing countries with the help of aid organisations, and have students manage the implementation of the technology," Dr Schafer said.

Australian technology for US spacecraft

A tiny radiation monitoring device developed at the University of Wollongong will be orbiting the earth on the next generation of United States satellites and spacecraft, gathering vital information on radiation levels to help NASA predict the radiobiological effect of cosmic radiation.

It will help NASA determine the safe levels of exposure for astronauts aboard space shuttles and orbiting space stations.

The device, an advanced solid state radiation micro-dosimeter, has been invented and developed by the UOW's Centre For Medical Radiation Physics, which has an international reputation for its advanced research work in radiation detection instrumentation.

There will be three of the devices – the size of a chocolate bar – on each spacecraft, two inside and one on the outside to measure the effects of cosmic radiation outside and inside the cabin.

The Wollongong team beat contenders from the United States and Canada to

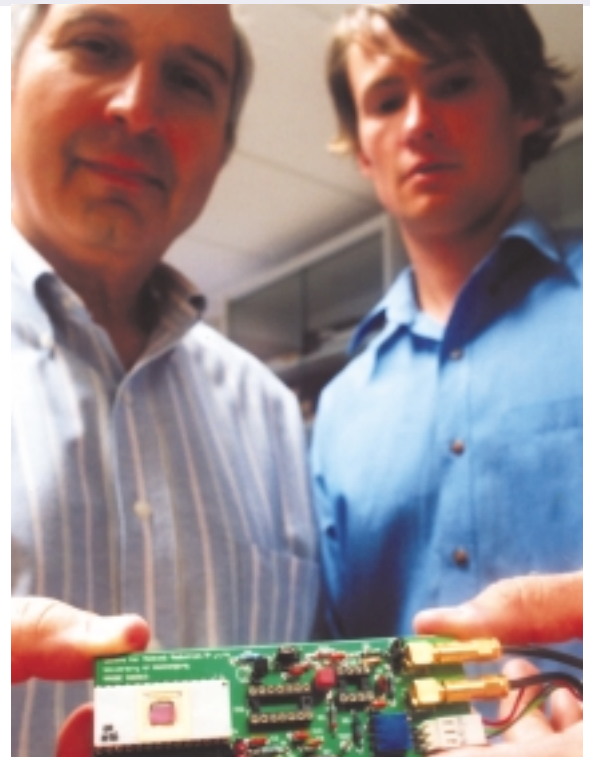
be selected for the project at the US Naval Academy Aeronautic Department at Annapolis. The University is also working with Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, and NASA on the space radiation measuring project.

Wollongong's Centre for Medical Radiation Physics is headed by Professor Anatoly Rozenfeld, the former Soviet scientist who joined UOW in 1993. The Centre is known for its comprehensive Medical Radiation Physics education program and the strong research associated with this program.

"Our device was chosen for the space project because it was the best and most innovative," Prof Rozenfeld said. "It is simple, light and energy-efficient."

"Next year, the United States satellite MIDISAT will be carrying small boxes with the University of Wollongong logo on the side of the satellite into space, which is very exciting for us," Professor Rozenfeld said.

"Having NASA using a device we developed to send back important



information to help it model the radiobiological effects of space environment is great recognition for our many years of work with our Centre's research students, and intensive collaboration with advanced radiation hadron therapy oncology

institutions around the world. It is an honour for our Centre, and for the University of Wollongong."

Professor Anatoly Rozenfeld is pictured above with PhD student Iwan Cornelius.





Peter Cousens, far left, and Jeff Kevin, lecturer in performance at UOW, far right, with the new [Theatre] company members.

Peter Cousens launches new theatre company

Actor Peter Cousens officially launched a new theatre company in the Illawarra on 7 March at the University of Wollongong (UOW). Cousens has also accepted an offer to be a Visiting Fellow at UOW's Faculty of Creative Arts this Autumn Session.

Cousens, who has starred in productions such as Phantom of the Opera, Miss Saigon and Les Miserables, launched Square Brackets [Theatre]. The event was hosted by the faculty dean, Professor Andrew Schultz.

Artistic co-ordinator of the new postgraduate company, Mr John Senczuk, of the Faculty of Creative Arts, said it was time to offer local audiences a strong and credible alternative theatre experience to the mainstream imported product. He said the company would offer Wollongong audiences of all ages high-quality theatre at affordable prices while championing a talented group of young people in the community in which they have lived and studied during their tertiary training.

The company comprises a cohort of students who have excelled in academic and practical application at undergraduate level from the Faculty of Creative Arts' Performance Program. The young actors are now pursuing either an Honours or Masters Program.



Mr John Senczuk

The actors are: Nicole Archer, Sam Booth, Amy Kensett, Katrina Rautenberg, Zoe Steen, Laura Stevens, Erin Taylor, Kareena Thomas and Glen Woolgar.

Mr Senczuk said [Theatre] would provide them with the opportunity to exercise their talents through a season of public performances at the Bridge Theatre, Coniston, and at the Illawarra Performing Arts Centre.

Actor Peter Carroll (Evita, Cats, Chinchilla and Uncle Vanya) will be patron of the company. Peter is now touring nationally in a revival of his signature piece, Ron Blair's, The Christian Brother, and said he was looking forward to spending time with the company of nine actors and two directors later in the year.

The company's inaugural production was Carlo Goldoni's, A Current Mishap, at the Bridge Theatre from 19-29 March. Bookings for further productions can be made on 4221 3996.

New-look web site and UOW virtual tour

The University of Wollongong has revealed a new-look web site, designed to improve the functionality of the UOW site, as well as enhance the look and feel of the site.

The site showcases a number of New Media components, such as a Virtual Tour of UOW, illustrating the University's commitment to innovation and harnessing technology in an effective way.

It has been an extensive process of collaboration with users across the University, as well as the wider community, including prospective students, graduates and business leaders. As well as the redesign, information has been updated and reorganised to address the currency of issues and information.

The site provides a wealth of information on undergraduate and postgraduate courses, research programs and partnerships, resources for media such as an UOW experts database, student services, educational policies and practice, and the University's strategic plan.

As part of the redesign of the site, a need has been identified to use the interactive potential of new web technologies to bring the UOW 'experience' to all visitors and prospective students.

The World Wide Web is shrinking the boundaries of time and space with multimedia capabilities unthinkable a decade ago. The development of high-speed internet and Virtual Reality technologies now enables visitors to interact in a self-directed way with an online virtual environment.

The development of an online "Virtual Tour", accessed via the new home page and other key pages including faculty home pages, has been carried out to extend the marketing potential of the UOW site allowing users to "walk through" the campus environment from their homes, schools or offices. The tour is themed around the physical environment, resources and facilities, academic and research strengths and a students' experience of life at the University, in a way that cannot be captured by brochures and photographs alone.

The tour combines 360 degree photographs and other more detailed photography, interactive maps, video, audio and text-based information within a highly interactive and intuitive interface.

Check out the site and take a walk through the University via the virtual tour at: www.uow.edu.au



Awards, achievements and accolades



The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Wollongong, Professor Gerard Sutton, inspects Clare Cochrane's winning sculpture designs ahead of her departure to the Middle East.

Sculpture student wins her way to Abu Dhabi conference

A third-year sculpture student from the University of Wollongong's Faculty of Creative Arts, Clare Cochrane, has won the commission to design a trophy for an international student conference held in the United Arab Emirates.

Clare won prizemoney of \$2,500 and airfare along with all accommodation costs to attend the Education Without Borders 2003 conference held in Abu Dhabi in February. She presented a report outlining her design concept during the conference.

The idea for the sculpture emerged during a visit to Australia late last year by Dr Tayeb A. Kamali, from the United Arab Emirates, who has wide-ranging involvement with the international business and educational communities. He visited Australia to present an Occasional Address at one of the University of Wollongong's graduation ceremonies.

Dr Kamali, is the Vice-Chancellor of the United Arab Emirates' Higher Colleges of Technology (HRT), Director of Abu Dhabi Men's College and the founding member and Managing Director of the Centre for Excellence for Applied Research and Training (CERT).

He was actively involved in the running of the Education Conference 2003. Some UOW students had the opportunity to participate in this conference.

Nominated doctoral students were able to attend with all fees, airfares, accommodation and on-ground costs covered. The conference is an international student conference designed to promote Information Age skills, e-learning, networking, and collaboration of teams working across national and linguistic borders.

Twenty of Clare's sculptures, made by Wollongong glass manufacturer Elke Wilkens, were shipped to the conference to be presented to the winners of the best student papers.

The glass sculptures are each 60cm high and weigh 10kg. They were engraved with the conference logo and also featured an image of the patron, the President of the United Arab Emirates, His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan.

Students scoop macromedia competition

Graphic Design and New Media students scooped the prizewinning list in a recent animation competition sponsored by Firmware/Motion Graphics.

Martin Schute gained first prize, David Walin was runner-up and Matthew Ellis, a finalist. They used animation to express their creativity in a macromedia animation. Their work was screened as part of a collaborative performance with students from the Sound and Composition course at the University of Wollongong who provided a music improvisation for the animations.

The students' lecturer is Marius Foley from the Faculty of Creative Arts.

The winning animations have been posted on the Firmware web site, www.firmware.com.au/competition/flashcomp.html

Recognised for their achievements

Professor Peter Rousch, an Emeritus Professor and former Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the University of Wollongong and Associate Professor Ainslie Lamb, an academic staff member of our Faculty of Law, have been honoured with an Order of Australia award (AM).

Professor Rousch was granted the award for "services to the higher education sector, to support for greater access to tertiary education for Aboriginal students, to the arts, and to the community".

Professor Lamb was granted the award for her "service to the legal profession, particularly as an educator in the area of cross-cultural and indigenous issues, and to the community, particularly in education".

National Parks appointment

The Dean of the Faculty of Science at the University of Wollongong, Professor Rob Whelan, has been appointed as Chairperson to the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council.

The appointment is for a two-year term ending on 30 April 2004.

The Minister for the Environment, Mr Bob Debus, said Professor Whelan's past involvement in the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council has played a significant role in the advancement of nature conservation in NSW.

Professor Whelan's specialist areas of expertise are in fire ecology, pollination biology and threatened species.

UOW graduate recognised for role in career development activities

Maree Costello, 2002 President of the University of Wollongong Golden Key chapter, was awarded the Regional Student Leader Award at the Student Achievement Breakfast held as part of the 2003 Golden Key Asia-Pacific Conference.

Ms Costello, 23, graduated from the University last year with a Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Law degree, gaining First Class Honours in Law. She was recognised for her role in organising the Inaugural Illawarra Graduate Careers Fair.

The Careers Fair attracted 29 local businesses to the University in May last year, and was the first Tertiary-based Careers Fair that sought to link local business opportunities with students studying in the region.

Passing of Professor Lewis Schmidt

Professor Lewis Schmidt, an Emeritus Professor and Foundation Professor of Civil Engineering at the University of Wollongong, passed away in Melbourne on January 25, 2003.

Professor Schmidt had a long career in engineering education together with significant experience in structural engineering. He received the Pioneer's Award for the development of research in Space Structures in 1993. This honour is awarded annually by the Space Structures Research Centre, University of Surrey, to one person worldwide.

He was a Commonwealth Fellow at St Johns College, Cambridge in 1976, and was the recipient of a Royal Society Award in London in 1976. He was also the reviewer for seven international journals related to structural engineering.





The ACT Brumbies have followed in the footsteps of a growing number of national and international sporting teams to select the University of Wollongong's Recreation and Aquatic Centre (URAC) sporting facilities as a training base.

The Brumbies spent a week training at the University before their Super 12 trial against Auckland at WIN Stadium last month.

Later this month South Africa's Super 12 team, the Natal Sharks, will base themselves at UOW for their 'Down Under' campaign, taking in games in Australia and New Zealand.

SHARK to attack youngsters' low physical activities

It is probably all too common a sight in many households with young children glued to the television or playing on computers while physical activity takes a backseat.

Eight to 10-year-olds who have low physical activity levels will be the target of a University of Wollongong research study, the first of its kind in Wollongong, to be conducted between April and June this year, which will offer a fun-based activity program with children participating in a variety of games, sport and recreation activities.

Part of the study will involve children wearing an accelerometer around their waists. It is discreetly hidden away small box that will objectively test the daily activity levels of the wearers.

Information from the accelerometers will be downloaded on to a computer to provide accurate measurement levels of the children's physical movement. The study, which carries the program name of SHARK (Skills Honing and Active Recreation for Kids) is being carried out by researchers in the Faculty of Education, Department of Biomedical Science, and the Metabolic Research Centre.

Dr Tony Okely, from the Faculty of Education, said: "Our aim is initially to improve a child's confidence in being active and from that point set them up in a regime which hopefully will get them physically active for the rest of their lives."

He said the idea was for the children to learn that they could still watch TV and play on their computers but at the same time enjoy being involved in a fun physical activity program.

Dr Okely said the problem of obesity was rapidly increasing in all developing countries so it was hoped programs like SHARK would go some way to combating this problem.

Runner to take on the world

University of Wollongong student Eloise Poppett's Sydney Olympic dream was destroyed by injury, but the 20-year-old 5000-metre runner's bid for Athens in 2004 is now right on track.

Eloise, from Sutherland, leaves on March 22 for the world cross-country championships in Switzerland. She qualified for the Australian team with a strong second place in the 5000-metre race at the Melbourne round of the Telstra A national athletics series early in the month.

The trip to Switzerland will be the first leg of what she hopes will be an international double this year, as her sights are set on either the world track and field championships in Paris in August, or the world university championships in South Korea at the same time.

Eloise has just started a Bachelor of Exercise Science degree at UOW, studying part-time while she juggles training and her part-time job as assistant to Paul Manning, executive director of UOW's University Recreation and Aquatic Centre. She also has a National Australia Bank sports scholarship to help her with her studies and training.

Eloise is back to full fitness after a series of stress fractures and shin splints derailed her athletics career for the past three years. Most heart-breaking was a stress fracture to her hip after Eloise ran a time 17 seconds under the Olympic qualifying time before the Sydney Olympics. Just 16, she was named in the shadow Australian team and even measured for a team uniform, but the injury destroyed any chance of competing at the Games.

Now, after three years battling to overcome her injuries, she is ready to resume her international career, starting with the world cross-country championships.

"I'm very relieved," Eloise admitted after running second to national champion Benita Johnson in Melbourne confirmed her selection.



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