

# EMERITUS

October 2011

Newsletter No 36 of the Australian National University Emeritus Faculty



Back numbers of *Emeritus* can be found here <http://www.anu.edu.au/emmeritus/news.html>

The ANU Emeritus Faculty,  
Fellows Lane Cottage - Building 3T. [See [www.anu.edu.au/emmeritus](http://www.anu.edu.au/emmeritus) for location map]  
Postal address PO Box 6050, O'Connor, ACT 2602. Phone: 02 6125 5309 Fax: 02 6125 5262

## VC's address to ANUEF

The Vice-Chancellor's recent address to the Faculty can be seen and heard here:  
<http://www.anu.edu.au/emmeritus/events/event-111019.html>

It is worth looking at.

## Urgent need for science education in schools and on streets

Professor Suzanne Cory, president of the Australian Academy of Science, addressing the National Press Club on 28 September 2011 said the Australian Academy of Science has called on the Government to create a Sovereign Fund for Science, to secure the future prosperity of the nation.

She said that one of the most important missions of the Academy is to nurture scientific excellence in Australia. "Conscious of this responsibility, I want to share with you the Academy's thoughts on the state of Australian Science, and Australian Science and Maths Education," she said.

"Australia's future prosperity depends on substantially strengthening both Australia's proud history of discovery and development. Let me begin by reminding you that Australia has a long history of producing world-changing technology. The examples are too numerous to give you more than a taster here. Many of the 19th century inventions are icons of Australian history, including the

grain stripper<sup>1</sup>, the stump-jump plough<sup>2</sup> and the electric drill<sup>3</sup>.

"The 20th century gave us the black box flight recorder<sup>4</sup>, the inflatable escape slide<sup>5</sup>; and the plastic polymer bank note<sup>6</sup>. Our medical scientists and technologists have given us the humidicrib<sup>7</sup>; plastic<sup>8</sup> and multi-focal spectacle lenses<sup>9</sup> and, more recently, day/night disposable contact lenses<sup>10</sup>. Countless lives have been saved by Howard Florey's application of penicillin to combat infection; Fiona Wood's invention of spray-on skin for burns patients (1992) and Don Metcalf's hormones for white blood cell production (1960s-80s)."

Nine of the 10 Nobel Prizes awarded to Australians have been in Science. She listed also recent developments in Australian science including **WiFi**

<sup>1</sup> 1843 -John Ridley and John Bull of SA

<sup>2</sup> 1876 Richard and Clarence Bowyer Smith

<sup>3</sup> 1889 Arthur James Arnot Union Electric Company in Melbourne

<sup>4</sup> David Warren in Melbourne 1958

<sup>5</sup> 1965; Jack Grant Qantas

<sup>6</sup> David Solomon, CSIRO, 1988

<sup>7</sup> Edward Thomas Both 1953

<sup>8</sup> 1960; Scientific Optical Laboratories in Adelaide

<sup>9</sup> 1992 Stephen Newman Qld

<sup>10</sup> Vision CRC/CSIRO; 2003-now

Continued next page

CSIRO scientist John O. Sullivan's pioneering work in radioastronomy which led to the invention of WiFi. As of mid-2010, the WiFi patent had already netted CSIRO an estimated \$250 million, which is being ploughed back into research and development via CSIRO's Science and Industry Endowment Fund - and it is predicted to ultimately bring CSIRO upwards of one-billion-dollars<sup>11</sup>.

**Relenza:** CSIRO also gave us the influenza drug, Relenza, through the work of Peter Colman, Graeme Laver, Mark Von Itzstein and their teams.

**Bionic Ear:** In the 1970s a team of medical scientists and engineers led by Graeme Clark developed the first prototype bionic ear; this Australian invention has now brought hearing to more than 250,000 people worldwide<sup>12</sup>.

**Gardasil:** The Gardasil story is another great example of Australian innovation that has made a big splash on the world stage. Gardasil, the vaccine developed by Ian Frazer's team at the University of Queensland, in collaboration with CSL, prevents infection with the virus, and therefore also prevents cervical cancer.

**Plastic Solar Sheeting:** Looking to the future, an Australian success story in the making is being developed by the Victorian Organic Solar Cell Consortium, a collaboration involving the University of Melbourne, CSIRO, Monash University and four Australian and international companies. This wonderful meeting of minds from industry and academia, which includes my Academy colleague Professor Andrew Holmes, has produced a type of flexible plastic solar cell, much like our polymer bank notes. The cells are printed with a light-sensitive ink that converts sunlight to energy, mimicking photosynthesis.

"Success stories such as these are very inspiring," she said, "But - as I am sure

<sup>11</sup> Andrew Collety, The Australian, 31 August 2010

(<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/australian-it/csiro/story-e6fmgakx-1225912084897>) as at 9 September 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Graeme Clark Foundation (<http://graemeclarkfoundation.org/About%20G%20Clark/GMC%20FAQs.pdf>) as at 9 Sept 2011

most of you know - translating scientific discoveries into commercial success is a long and difficult road, requiring:

- collaboration across scientific disciplines.
- cooperation between industry, academia and government.
- strong protection of intellectual property
- far-sighted and patient investors
- and a healthy measure of good timing and good fortune!

She went on, "Four things threaten our ongoing R&D performance and, as a consequence, our economic security and ongoing prosperity:

- The level of our investment in research and development;
- Our capacity to lever this investment by engaging effectively with the global science effort;
- The poor science literacy of our workforce and our community; and
- The decline of interest in science education in our schools.

After making comparisons with other countries, she said, "Research excellence is a precious entity that requires constant tending and nurturing. But the environment that researchers find themselves in today is just the opposite: a Darwinian battle for survival, where costs are rising faster than the level of funding and career opportunities are limited, despite recent government initiatives to improve them.

"Students contemplating a career in research see how hard it is for their mentors and they are understandably daunted by what they see. Women in particular feel daunted, when they realise the added degree of difficulty they face when they take career breaks to have children. I meet many young women who have done brilliant PhDs but then either left science altogether or decided to move sideways, into a more stable if less exciting career...

"The Australian Academy of Science therefore calls on the Government to create a Sovereign Fund for Science, to secure the future prosperity of the nation. The goal should be to increase Australia's research and development expenditure to at least 3% of GDP by 2020".

She pointed out that being part of big international programs opens up horizons that would be inconceivable for Australian Science going it alone.

“It would be a grave blow if our ability to compete on the international stage were to be diminished. I strongly urge the Federal Government to fund in its next Budget a new program to provide strategic support for Australia’s International Science Linkages.”

On the science capability in the workforce, she said the minerals sector “acknowledges that we cannot ride the current boom indefinitely. Further, the Minerals Council of Australia warns that skills shortages and structural weaknesses in the Australian economy have been masked by the boom...<sup>13</sup> .

“The workforce of tomorrow will be drawn from the students of today. If we do not equip these students with the right skills, we will find ourselves in the near future with a very lacklustre economy and a dangerous paucity of skilled workers.

“Certain skills are already in short supply in Australia<sup>14</sup>. In fact, the *No More Excuses* report<sup>15</sup> issued by the Industry Skills Council earlier this year points to an alarming deficit in even basic skills. According to this report, literally .millions of Australians have insufficient language, literacy and numeracy skills. (the old-fashioned 3Rs) .to benefit fully from training or to participate effectively at work.. The Council reports that a recent project<sup>16</sup> looking at the maths skills of bricklaying apprentices at a regional TAFE showed that:

- 75% could not do basic arithmetic; and
- 80% could not calculate the area of a rectangle, or the pay owed for working four-and-a-half hours

On the state of science and maths education, she said that without a robust and inspiring science and maths education system, it is impossible to create an internationally competitive workforce. Researchers, engineers and technologists are not the only workers requiring scientific training. Think about the myriad other jobs which require a basic understanding of science and maths. Food handlers need a basic understanding of microbiology to ensure the food they sell is safe for consumers. Farmers need knowledge of biology, soil science and meteorology to optimise their production and manage risk; Forestry workers need to be able to operate computer-controlled equipment for harvesting and processing timber; Entertainment workers need a broad foundation in basic physics to design and operate stage lighting and sound systems ...

“Today, student disenchantment with science continues. This is all too apparent from the declining number of students who choose to study science in senior secondary school<sup>17</sup>. ... While Australian students have been losing interest in science, their international peers have been taking it up with great enthusiasm. “

The picture is much worse for mathematics. Australia’s early secondary mathematical literacy scores have significantly declined over the last decade and our Year 4 and Year 8 students ranked only 14th internationally in the most recent “Trends International Mathematics and Science Study”, conducted in 2007<sup>18</sup>. This decline in

<sup>13</sup> Minerals Week 2011 Seminar .Minerals Council of Australia (MCA) Chairman’s speech ([http://www.minerals.org.au/news/minerals\\_week\\_2011\\_seminar\\_chairmans\\_speech/](http://www.minerals.org.au/news/minerals_week_2011_seminar_chairmans_speech/)) as at 12 Sept 2011.

<sup>14</sup> (2011) *No More Excuses*, An Industry Response to the Language, Literacy and Numeracy, Industry Skills Council

<sup>15</sup> (2011) *No More Excuses*, An Industry Response to the Language, Literacy and Numeracy, Industry Skills Council

<sup>16</sup> GippsTAFE Trade maths project 2009

<sup>17</sup> (2011) *Secondary Science: The Bad News*. Data from DEEWR Statistical Collection. 38 Ainley, J, Kos, J and Nicholas, M. (2008) Participation in Science, Mathematics and Technology in Australian Education. ACER

<sup>18</sup> TIMSS 2007 International Mathematics Report: Findings from IEA’s Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study at the Fourth and Eighth Grades. Mullis, I.V.S.,

Australia's mathematical literacy is of grave concern because mathematics is an enabling science<sup>19</sup>. Without maths it is not possible to make use of other sciences either in the lab or in the workforce....”

Last December education ministers approved the content for new national curricula in English, history, maths and science. In coming months, they will be asked to sign off on the standards for these curricula. This is an important initiative and the Academy of Science applauds it. But further investment is needed to ensure that it is properly implemented: Investment in teachers, and in inspiring curriculum programs. Inspired (and inspiring) teachers will be the most important agents for improving educational outcomes.

### The Academy's programs

Commenting on the Federal Government's decision to withdraw its support, Professor Cory said:

The Academy of Science has a very deep and longstanding commitment to programs that enhance Australian science education. Our web-based program *Nova: Science in the News*, offers a balanced non-technical summary of the science behind topics in the news. It is one of the most popular online Australian science education resources. Today, however, I want to focus on our two most recent science education programs: *Primary Connections*, for primary school; and *Science by Doing*, for junior secondary school. Both have received substantial funding and support from the Federal Government.

A comprehensive evaluation of the impact of *Primary Connections* found that mainstream students from *Primary Connections* classes have a significantly higher scientific literacy than similar students from comparison

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Martin, M.O., & Foy, P. (with Olson, J.F., Preuschoff, C., Erberber, E., Arora, A., & Galia, J.). (2008). Chestnut Hill, MA: TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center, Boston College..

<sup>19</sup> Sadler PM and Tai RH (2007) The Two High-School Pillars Supporting College Science. *Science* 317 457-458 2007

classes<sup>20</sup>. This includes their ability to reason about and represent scientific data, and their understanding of the processes of science.

The results that *Primary Connections* has had with Indigenous students, in particular, have been outstanding<sup>21</sup>. Indigenous students taught under the *Primary Connections* program were not only more engaged with science, they were more confident in all aspects of the classroom. Their self-esteem improved, they participated more fully in class activities, and they were more enthusiastic about learning. Because of this, their attendance records at school also noticeably improved....

*Science by Doing* has achieved similarly excellent results. An independent evaluation showed that junior secondary school students taught using the *Science By Doing* methods were more engaged, enthusiastic and asked more and higher level questions . all leading to greater learning and improved work quality. Students described the *Science by Doing* units as more fun “better than normal science”. Teachers involved in both programs report that the programs improve their own confidence and offer .better ways of learning..

Given these outstanding outcomes, the Academy was devastated to learn earlier this year that the Federal Government had decided to withdraw its support. This occurred just before the Academy finished developing *Primary Connections* and immediately after the incredibly well-received pilot stage of *Science by Doing*.

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<sup>20</sup> Mark W Hackling and Vaughan Prain (2008) Impact of Primary Connections on students; science processes, literacies of science and attitudes towards science (<http://www.science.org.au/primaryconnections/research-and-evaluation/images/irr-15.pdf>).

<sup>21</sup> Robyn Bull (2008) Small Study .Big Success Story Primary Connections Incorporating Indigenous Perspectives Pilot Study Report. (<http://www.science.org.au/primaryconnections/research-and-evaluation/images/IndigenousPerspectivesReport.pdf>).

School Education Minister Peter Garrett wrote to me to explain that he hoped *Science by Doing* and *Primary Connections* would continue to help advance science teaching and learning in Australian schools. But, he said, he had no discretionary funding available to make it possible. Mr Garrett urged the Academy to liaise with “other agencies”.

The Academy remains deeply committed to its education programs. We believe all Australian students deserve access to such proven, quality programs. And so, even though it will take us longer and may not be able to be delivered equitably across Australian schools, the Academy is committed to rolling out *Primary Connections* and *Science by Doing* at cost price.

I am pleased to report we have made considerable progress toward achieving that goal. *Primary Connections* is being used in 55% of Australian primary schools. Uptake rates are even higher in Western Australia, Tasmania, Queensland and the ACT. It has now been endorsed for use throughout South Australian state primary schools and we are having very encouraging discussions with Victoria. We hope to hold similar conversations soon with the New South Wales government.

However, the challenge is much greater for *Science by Doing*, which needs considerable further funding to complete its development.

Mr Garrett announced last Friday [September 23] that there are new funds available for professional learning and curriculum on-line resources. This announcement has given us hope, but we are still waiting for word on whether the Academy's programs might be eligible. The Academy urges the Federal Government to use this approach - or another - to restore funding for *Science by Doing*.

I agree with Prime Minister Julia Gillard that science is one of the fundamental platforms upon which our conception of a modern

advanced society is based.<sup>22</sup> It is science, she says quite rightly, which has created greater progress over the past two centuries than all the previous millennia of human history. And it is science to which we turn for a better understanding of ourselves and the future of our fragile planet.

The whole of our society benefits from knowledge building. Australia can halt the decline in our international rankings for education, investment in science, and economic competitiveness. Let's invest now to turn that around and improve our standing on the world stage. Let's ensure we're prepared to fully engage in the booming global science effort.

We live in a crucial time for science in Australia and around the world. It is a time demanding strong leadership, from the grassroots to the highest levels of government. Together, we must ensure that science, research and innovation can continue to play their part in shaping our future and guiding our decisions.

These are not my words. They were spoken by Prime Minister Julia Gillard<sup>23</sup>. I could not agree more.

**Full text available at:**  
<http://science.org.au/events/lectures-and-speeches/documents/npc2011.pdf>

## Peter Lane tells his story

<sup>22</sup> Prime Minister Julia Gillard, 17 November 2010, Speech: 2010 Prime Minister's Prizes for Science. (<http://www.pm.gov.au/press-office/2010-prime-ministers-prizes-science>).

<sup>23</sup> Prime Minister Julia Gillard, 17 November 2010, Speech: 2010 Prime Minister's Prizes for Science. (<http://www.pm.gov.au/press-office/2010-prime-ministers-prizes-science>)

Other ANUEF Members are encouraged to send in their stories so that we can get to know more about ourselves.



I don't consider myself an academic. Indeed I have been somewhat bemused at being a member of an emeritus society, so you may imagine my vacillation in deciding to air my "bio" to such an illustrious group.

My parents and siblings each left school at about 15 years of age and were more than a little astounded, as was I, when I won one of those old Commonwealth Scholarships to attend university. With maths as my worst subject and English not much better, there was little choice but a soft science, and with visions of exploring the great outback (I had a strange obsession with the then quintessential "Australian") I studied geology at Sydney University. Without a thought of continuing in academia, on passing my BSc exams I took off to join a geophysical prospecting crew in northern Queensland.

On returning to Sydney I married Janny, a mischievous country girl I had first taken out at the age of fourteen, and then spent some time mapping rocks in PNG. As a grossly underpaid local geologist working for a US company, being unable to beat them I decided to join them, and we (by that time three) migrated to Canada where I worked mainly in northern Alberta and the North West Territories. This enabled me to return home having seen more oil exploration

activity during those three years than most Australian geologists would have seen in a decade.

During the "Poseidon Boom" petroleum geologists were a rare thing, and having seen a lot of oil I soon found myself managing a small exploration company in Sydney. That company, Vamgas NL, was subsequently acquired by Woodside Petroleum and so we (then five of us) were transferred to Melbourne. Within the year Burmah Oil gained control of Woodside and we (by now six) were transferred back to Sydney. I was promoted sideways to managing two subsidiary companies (Reef Oil NL and Basin Oil NL) and to oversee Burmah Oil's 36% interest it held in Santos Ltd.

Politics at that time were somewhat chaotic and Rex Conner had Burmah Oil in his sights. He forbade employees of the company to meet with his staff (or so we were told), and in an extremely poor career move – and not at all wise socially - I then joined the Labor Party.

Burmah Oil sold out of Woodside and in 1979 Bond Corporation acquired Burmah Oil Australia Ltd and we (no more additions) moved to Perth. I had nine hectic months working for Alan Bond, more than enough time to realise I was well out of my depth, and in 1980 I commenced consulting. It's only in retrospect that I understood what was happening in business at that time. I simply stuck to the science, writing prospectus reports and documents relating to company takeovers, seeing and often helping entrepreneurs make their fortunes, but not participating.

By 1987 I realised I did have an entrepreneurial streak and did a deal which would see us retire in comfort. Margaret River – the coast and the country – was our destination and in mid-October of that year bought our farm. In no more than a few days the Dow collapsed, quickly followed by my "iron clad" deal, spurring me on to develop two new skills: dishwashing and fencing. With my consulting business essentially wound up, I put my knowledge of the industry to what use I could and jointly founded two companies –Discovery

Petroleum NL and Tap Oil Limited – which were listed on the ASX, the former taken over in 1996, the same year in which the latter was listed.

During the 1990s our farm became the R&R centre for forest protesters and my long held interest in the environment was reignited. Following a spell on our local council, in 2000 I ran for the Greens WA, and although I had no chance of winning the (Lower House) seat, with the election issue being saving old growth forests the vote more than doubled in this electorate. Labor won that election, and with much credit to the Greens some 850,000 hectares of forests were put aside to be gazetted as national parks. While continuing to fight for responsible forest management I have become more than a little obsessed with water management, an area where my geological experience has been invaluable. Based on good science we were able to stop excessive amounts of water being taken from our aquifers (they provide critical support to groundwater dependent ecosystems) and am confident that a proposal to mine coal within (!) our aquifers close to Margaret River will soon meet a similar fate.

Publications? Well, a few industry and environmental papers, and a book “Geology of Western Australia’s National Parks”. The latter provided the ideal excuse for spending our holidays in a tent in the middle of the desert instead of touring Europe.

Despite encouraging my kids to launch into corporate careers, they read my body language and three of them (an architect, a musician and a permaculturist), along with four grandchildren live (at respectable distances from us!) on our farm, another in town and another grandchild with our great-grandchild in Perth.

My body will no along allow me to surf or windsurf so I now try to maintain a sort of fitness by pedaling a mountain bike, farming, camping and keeping up with the grandkids.

**Peter Lane**

## **Perversions of Prejudice – How Bias Distorts**

The Independent Scholars Association of Australia is holding its annual conference from Thursday, November 3 and Friday, November 4 2011 at the Fourth Floor Conference Room, National Library of Australia, Canberra.

The topic to be addressed by a range of speakers is *Perversions of Prejudice – How Bias Distorts*.

Conference papers will be of 20 minutes duration, followed by 10 minutes discussion time. Papers should reach ISAA by 18 November 2011 for inclusion in the *Proceedings* and should be on disk or e-mail attachment.

### **Thursday 3 November**

- 8.45 Registration begins**  
**9.30 Welcome and opening**  
**Margy Burn**  
 Assistant Director-General,  
 Australian Collections and Reader  
 Services, NLA.
- 9.45 Revealing prejudices**  
**Perry McIntyre**  
*The Rovers and The Royals—  
 respectable?*  
 Historian, author, ISAA member.  
**Wendy Michaels**  
*Parodic perversions: Jane Austen’s  
 distortions of literary conventions in  
 Northanger Abbey.*  
 Author and former lecturer, ISAA  
 member.
- 11.00 Morning tea**  
**11.30 Tricks of the trade**  
**Auriol Weigold**  
*The fine art of propaganda.*  
 Historian, Visiting Fellow University  
 of Canberra, ISAA member.  
**Patricia Clarke**  
*Bias for good or ill? Australian  
 Government overseas propaganda  
 in the 1950s.*  
 Author, editor, historian, ISAA  
 member.
- 12.30 Lunch**

**Continued Next Page**

- 2.00** **History and context**  
**John Greenwell**  
*European anti-Semitism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century—a failure of the Enlightenment?*  
 Retired lawyer, ISAA member.  
**Christine Jennett (with Lance Smith)**  
*Hate crimes.*  
 Political sociologist/criminologist, ISAA member.
- 3.00** **Afternoon Tea**  
**3.30** **The rule of law**  
**Bill Rowlings**  
*Images of 11/11: are you afraid of who's watching you?*  
 CEO of Civil Liberties Australia.  
**Refugee law expert (speaker TBA)**  
*Asylum seekers.*  
 Biog. TBA.
- 6pm** **Annual Lecture**  
**Antony Loewenstein**  
*Why WikiLeaks forces accountability on the insular journalistic and political club.*
- Antony Loewenstein is a freelance journalist, author, documentarian and blogger. He has written extensively in a range of national and international media, written several books and is a regular commentator on radio and TV. His 2010 ABC Radio National documentary was a finalist in the UN Media Peace Awards.
- 7.30** **Conference dinner** at Choices Vietnamese Restaurant, Shop 5, Palmerston Lane, Manuka.

<b>Friday 4 November</b>
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- 9.30** **Contested territory**  
**Janette Lindesay**  
*The Climate Change conversation in Australia.*  
 Associate Professor (Climatology), Deputy Director and Associate Director Education, Fenner School of Environment and Society, ANU.  
**Ken McLeod**  
*Trouble with the truth.*

- Canberra Skeptics.  
**10.30** Morning tea  
**11.00** **Human nature**  
**Ron Wells**  
*Perverse sex ratios in human births.*  
 Epidemiologist, senior health administrator, ISAA member.  
**Gaynor Macdonald**  
*Why white horses are not horses and Aboriginal Australians are not Australians.*  
 Consultant anthropologist, ISAA member.  
**12.00** **Lunch**  
**1.30** **Different prisms**  
**Sybil Jack**  
*A modest defence of prejudice.*  
 Historian, ISAA member.  
**Hans Goodman**  
*Science, faith and prejudice.*  
 Retired electrical engineer and teacher, ISAA member.  
**2.30** **ISAA AGM**  
**4.30** **Finish**

**For more information contact:**  
**Independent Scholars Association of Australia Inc**  
 PO Box 268  
 Canberra City ACT 2601  
 info@isaa.org.au  
 www.isaa.org.au  
 02 62512172 or 03 93477839

### Conferring of Awards

The Australian National University will be conducting *Conferring of Awards* ceremonies on December 14, 15 and 16 at Llewellyn Hall.

ANU Emeritus Faculty members are cordially invited to participate in the academic processions for these ceremonies. Please register your intent to participate via the following web address:

[http://www.anu.edu.au/sas/graduation/Emeritus\\_Poll/](http://www.anu.edu.au/sas/graduation/Emeritus_Poll/)

You will be asked to select the ceremony (or ceremonies) you wish to attend, and the area that you will be representing. A schedule for each ceremony is included on the website.

Registration will close on Sunday 4 December at 5pm..

It is the responsibility of each participant to provide their own academic dress. If a participant is unsure of the code of dress, the Office of the Council and Boards Secretariat (x52113 or [Head.Cabs@anu.edu.au](mailto:Head.Cabs@anu.edu.au)) may be consulted.

Assembly for all processions occurs near the Graduands Robing Room; there will be signs on the day providing directions. Registered participants are asked to assemble in this location, at least half an hour prior to the commencement of the ceremony.

For more information, call Narelle Jones (x54648) or if you are unable to complete the registration form.

## ANUEF Snippets

### Monthly get-together

Usually the ANUEF meets monthly on the **first Wednesday of every month** for members to get together informally. The Collegiality Lunches will run until the last one for 2011 in November. The meetings are held in the Molony Room. Members can bring their own lunch, or buy one from Caterina's next door. Drinks are available for a donation of \$2 and tea, coffee and juice are available. There is sometimes a theme for these lunches. Please come if you can. There is no need to RSVP

### What's on at the ANU

*What's On at ANU*. is a fortnightly email for staff and students that aims to highlight many of the interesting, enlightening and engaging public lectures, seminars and events happening around the university.

All of these events are open to the public. Please check if reservations are needed.

For more information on any of the events listed, or to see a calendar of upcoming events, go to <http://billboard.anu.edu.au/events.asp>

## ANUEF diary dates

**16 November** - Adrian D'Hage *The Dangers of Religion and US Foreign Policy in the Middle East*

**14 December** Committee + ANUEF AGM + Christmas Party  
<http://www.anu.edu.au/emeritus>  
[http://www.anu.edu.au/emeritus/events/Past\\_Events.html](http://www.anu.edu.au/emeritus/events/Past_Events.html)

More details can be found here:  
<http://www.anu.edu.au/emeritus/events.html>

## Your benefits

Check this web site for a list of benefits enjoyed by members.  
<http://www.anu.edu.au/emeritus/benefits.html>

## Current Affairs

### Comment wanted on Australia's diplomatic missions

The work and structure of Australia's international diplomatic missions will be examined by a new inquiry into Australia's overseas representation.

The inquiry by the federal parliament's Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade committee will review the activities, staffing and location of Australia's diplomatic missions, including the use of technology to conduct diplomatic work.

"The use of new technologies offer a range of possibilities and have the potential to enhance Australia's footprint and diplomatic impact in a cost effective manner," Foreign Affairs sub-committee chair Mr Nick Champion MP said.

The new inquiry will further examine issues raised in two earlier committee inquiries—into Australia's relationship with Africa and a review of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Annual Report 2009–10.

“While the committee recommended in the Africa Report that Australia’s diplomatic representation in Africa be increased, it recognised that a broader review of overseas representation was needed.

“In the review of the annual report the committee expressed the view that there was a substantial question in relation to DFAT’s future role and the adequacy of the services it provides on behalf of Australia,” Mr Champion said.

The inquiry terms of reference include examining;  
the activities that Australia’s diplomatic posts must undertake;  
their geographic location and spread;  
the appropriate level of staffing, including locally engaged staff; and  
the effect of e-diplomacy and information and communications technology on the activities of diplomatic posts.

The sub-committee will receive written submissions until 30 November 2011 and will commence public hearings in early 2012. Contributions are welcome and encouraged from organisations and individuals.

For more information contact:  
Inquiry Secretary, John Carter, on 02 6277 2313 or visit the Committee website at  
<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jfadt/index.htm>

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The Joint Standing Committee on Treaties has released Report 120 in which it recommends the Government ratify three amendments to the Antarctic Treaty in relation to environmental and tourism issues, and five taxation treaties.

The three proposed amendments to the Antarctic Treaty will:

- establish an environmental liability regime so that those operating in the Antarctic have enough funds to

repair environmental damage they have caused;

- require tourist operators in the Antarctic to have contingency plans and insurance to pay for medical emergencies in the Antarctic; and
- make mandatory regulations previously self imposed by the tourism industry relating to health and safety, and the Antarctic environment.

The five taxation treaties relate to the Marshall Islands, Mauritius and Montserrat. These treaties are part of Australia’s implementation of the OECD’s standards on the elimination of harmful tax practices.

Report 120 is available on the Committee’s website:

[www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jsct/reports.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jsct/reports.htm) or by contacting the Committee Secretariat on (02) 6277 4002.

### Parliamentary Committee hears from Indigenous languages educator

The Coordinator of Indigenous Languages Education at the University of Sydney’s Koori Centre, John Hobson, gave evidence on October 13 to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs inquiring into language learning in Indigenous communities.

Mr Hobson has been working with Indigenous languages and language learners over the past 25 years.

In the Koori Centre’s submission to the inquiry, Mr Hobson says that “the benefits of giving attention to and recognising Indigenous Australian languages” are “axiomatic and parallel to the benefits of giving attention and recognition to Australian English”. Mr Hobson is critical of the record of government education for remote area Indigenous Australian children, stating that “if the Government wishes to use education to close the gap it should act to ensure high quality mother tongue education is provided

to those children who enter with English as a second language.”

Mr Hobson said that “If children receive a good primary education in a language they understand, they will acquire literacy and numeracy and an understanding of school processes that will allow them to subsequently acquire English as a second language sufficient to function satisfactorily in the world they occupy”.

The Committee’s inquiry is interested in the links between Indigenous languages and improving education, community wellbeing, interpreting services and strategies to close the gap in Indigenous disadvantage. The Committee aims to find out about how the use of Indigenous languages can assist in improving education and vocational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

As part of the terms of reference the Indigenous languages policies of Australian governments, and the benefits and effectiveness of Indigenous language maintenance and revitalisation programs are being investigated.

Information about the inquiry can be found at the inquiry’s website:  
[www.apf.gov.au/languages](http://www.apf.gov.au/languages)

### **ANU climate expert addresses biodiversity inquiry**

Climate scientist Professor Will Steffen appeared before the House of Representatives Climate Change, Environment and the Arts Committee for a public hearing on 13 October.

Professor Steffen is Executive Director of the **Australian National University** (ANU) Climate Change Institute and Co-Director of the Canberra Urban and Regional Futures (CURF) initiative. He also serves as a Climate Commissioner and is on the panel of experts advising the Multi-Party Climate Change Committee. Professor Steffen was the lead author of the 2009 advisory report to the Federal Government, ‘Australia’s Biodiversity and Climate Change’.

The inquiry is examining biodiversity and climate change in relation to nationally important ecosystems, with particular regard to terrestrial, marine and freshwater ecosystems; the role of connectivity between ecosystems; impacts on human communities; and strategies for sustainable resource use and enhancing community engagement.

Committee Chair, Tony Zappia, said that “while it is well known that Climate Change will have a broad range of impacts on our environment, this inquiry is seeking more specific information about how some of Australia’s most unique and biodiverse ecosystems will be affected. It will also examine adaptation techniques that could be more widely deployed by governments and the community to help ecosystems survive under a changing climate”.

Further details about the inquiry, including the terms of reference, can be obtained from the Committee’s website at:  
<http://www.apf.gov.au/house/committee/ccea/ccbio/index.htm>

### **Inquiry into Mental Health and Workforce Participation**

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Employment is continuing to take evidence for its inquiry into mental health and workforce participation.

The Committee’s Chair, Ms Amanda Rishworth said, “government organisations and employer groups both have key roles to play in this space. The committee is seeking strategies to enhance access to and participation in education, training and employment for those with a mental illness, as well as ways to promote mental wellbeing more generally in all workplaces.

Further hearings are scheduled

**For information on the inquiry:** contact the Secretariat on (02) 6277 4578 email [ee.reps@apf.gov.au](mailto:ee.reps@apf.gov.au) or visit the Committee’s website at <http://www.apf.gov.au/ee>

## Call for papers

*European Dilemmas: Internal and External issues facing the European Union*, December 7-8, 2011, University of Waikato, New Zealand. This is a multidisciplinary conference to investigate the broad phenomena which currently impact greatly on the EU, whether internally or externally. In the first instance we are calling for abstracts from potential presenters. Abstracts of 300 words should be submitted online by 1 August 2011. Please go to [www.eucnetwork.org.nz](http://www.eucnetwork.org.nz).

## Superannuation inquiry

A parliamentary Inquiry into legislation on the petroleum resource rent tax and 'phoenixing' that avoids payment of employees' superannuation is seeking urgent submissions, due this week.

The House of Representatives Economics Committee will inquire into and report on the Tax Laws Amendment (2011 Measures No. 8) Bill 2011 and the Pay As You Go Withholding Non-compliance Tax Bill 2011.

The bills clarify that the petroleum resource rent tax (PRRT) applies when a product is in its intended final form, rather than the earlier point in the production process when the substance first meets the definition of a marketable petroleum commodity. A later taxing point implies a higher tax liability.

The legal interpretation of this part of the PRRT has been the subject of a long running legal dispute between Esso and the Tax Office, with the most recent decision supporting the later taxing point. The Explanatory Memorandum to the bills states that the Federal Court's decision affirms 'the long established application of the PRRT'. An appeal on the decision is scheduled for November.

Secondly, the bills extend the director penalty regime to make directors personally liable for their company's unpaid superannuation guarantee amounts. This is designed to prevent a business 'phoenixing' to avoid its superannuation obligations for employees. The bills also allow the Tax Office to commence proceedings without

issuing a 21-day notice to the relevant directors. This prevents a company going into liquidation before the Tax Office starts legal proceedings.

The bills also make consequential amendments for the taxation of gaseous fuels and provide the Tax Office with discretion to disregard certain events that would otherwise trigger the assessment of certain income for a primary production trust.

The bills and the explanatory memorandum are available from the committee's website.

Submissions should be sent to the committee by close of business on Wednesday, 26 October 2011. A public hearing is scheduled between 9.15 am and 3 pm on Thursday, 27 October 2011 in committee room 2R1 at Parliament House, Canberra.

**For background information:** contact the committee secretariat:

Phone: (02) 6277 4564 Email:

[economics.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:economics.reps@aph.gov.au)

Website: [www.aph.gov.au/economics](http://www.aph.gov.au/economics)

## Management of Student Visas

The international education and training sector is Australia's third largest export industry. A recent Auditor-General report revealed, however, that the Department of Immigration and Citizenship's management of student visas has not kept pace with the demands of this dynamic environment. Issues were raised in regards to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship's student visa processing arrangements, compliance functions and strategic management relationship with the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

Considering these findings and the importance of the international education and training sector in terms of Australia's economy and population strategy, the federal parliament's Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit held a public hearing on October 12 to examine Audit Report No. 46 2010-11, *Management of Student Visas*.

“The Committee was interested to see how well the Department of Immigration and Citizenship has responded to key areas of concern highlighted by the Auditor-General, particularly in light of recent developments in the sector”, Chair Rob Oakeshott said.

For more information, contact the Committee Secretariat on telephone (02) 6277 4615, e-mail [jcpaa@aph.gov.au](mailto:jcpaa@aph.gov.au), or visit the Committee website [http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jcpaa/auditgen6\\_11/index.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jcpaa/auditgen6_11/index.htm)

### Overseas Student and Higher Education Support legislation

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Employment heard from officials from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations in relation to the following bills:

- Education Services for Overseas Students Legislation Amendment (Tuition Protection Service and Other Measures) Bill 2011;
- Education Services for Overseas Students (Registration Charges) Amendment (Tuition Protection Service) Bill 2011;
- Education Services for Overseas Students (TPS Levies) Bill 2011; and
- Higher Education Support Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2011.

Proceedings were open to the public. The text of the bills can be accessed, together with the Explanatory Memorandum, and submissions to the inquiry on the Committee's website <http://www.aph.gov.au/ee>.

**For information on the inquiry:** contact the Secretariat on (02) 6277 4573, email [ee.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:ee.reps@aph.gov.au) or visit the website at <http://www.aph.gov.au/ee>

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