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\$2000 self-education tax cap deferred

Now that the Federal election has been called for September 7, we are in for a bidding war of promises, endless analysis of slogan policies and a brief opportunity for organisations and interest groups to state their claims. It won't last long.

Of interest to the education lobby is the fate of the \$2000 self-education cap. Universities Australia has welcomed the decision to defer and review the introduction of the \$2,000 cap on tax deductions for self-education expenses, which it says, "shows that the Rudd government has listened to the concerns raised by universities, industry groups and practically every professional group in the country".

The statement goes on, "The twelve-month deferral represents a temporary but significant reprieve for the hundreds of thousands of people who choose or are required to invest in their own education and professional development," said Belinda Robinson, Chief Executive of peak body, Universities Australia (UA).

"The announcement follows the formation of a #ScrapTheCap Alliance of more than 70 industry and professional groups (led by UA) representing over 1.6 million professionals, united in their outrage over the negative economic and labour market implications of what would amount to a tax on education.

Ms Robison said that in announcing the tax cap earlier in this year—delivering a saving of approximately \$520 million—former Treasurer Wayne Swan justified it on the basis of cracking down on system abuse.

"If implemented the measure would have increased the effective cost of postgraduate fee paying courses by an estimated 30 — 54 per cent resulting in a decline in postgraduate and professional development programs by an estimated one third," she said. "It would reduce national productivity by up to \$6 billion per annum and reduce tax revenue by up to \$1.5 billion per year.

It would exacerbate skills shortages across the board, take us backwards in realising our ambition to become a knowledge nation built on education, skills and innovation, and scotch any aspiration to increase national productivity to 2 per cent.

It is clearly within the powers and the capability of the Australian Tax Office to ensure that individuals do not receive private benefits at the expense of Australian tax payers.

As the Economic Statement notes, the deferral 'will allow for further consultation on how best to target excessive claims while ensuring the impact on university enrolments and genuine continuing professional development is minimised.'

Ms Robinson said that the #ScrapTheCap Alliance would use the opportunity of the twelve month deferral and review process to continue to press its case in opposing policies at odds with achieving a smarter Australia.

"UA acknowledges the role played by Higher Education Minister Senator Kim Carr and Treasurer Chris Bowen in acknowledging that a more sophisticated approach to addressing alleged abuses of the taxation system should be explored".

"We also call on the Opposition to declare its hand on whether it intends to abolish the measure," Ms Robinson said.

Before the government's modification of the tax cap, Universities Australia said that postgraduate full fee student numbers could drop by up to 30 per cent in just four years and Australia's national productivity could fall by at least \$2.8 billion annually if the government went ahead with its proposal to tax education, modelling by Universities Australia has found.

The drop of around 30,000 students would decrease tax revenue by at least \$840 million per year as productivity falls, according to the peak body's submission on the government's proposal to cap at \$2,000 the amount of education-related expenses that a person can claim in one year.

Universities Australia's submission made clear that the tax cap would particularly disadvantage women, students from low socio-economic backgrounds and those who live in rural and remote regions. In its submission, Universities Australia provided a simple, efficient and revenue-neutral alternative to the \$2,000 cap on education expenses, which would replace the existing \$250 non-claimable threshold for work related, self-education claims with a \$90 non-claimable threshold for all work related expenses.

This would cost the average taxpayer claiming work related expenses \$27 per year.

"Not only would this measure produce the same level of savings as the \$2,000 cap in the short-term and increase the revenue stream to government in the long-term, it would do so without affecting the incentives for people to upgrade their skills, education and qualifications. It is simple, fair, efficient and vastly superior in policy integrity than the tax on education currently under consideration," Ms Robinson said.

The submission may be accessed at www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au.

In July, the Australian Medical Association condemned the cap on tax deductibility of work related self-education expenses as an "assault on education".

AMA president Dr Steve Hambleton said that according to a survey of its members, the AMA had found that "the average doctor spends \$12,637 each year on work related self-education." The survey among 9,000 doctors found that 92 per cent incurred such education expenses higher than the proposed \$2000 cap.

Dr Hambleton specifically noted that such a cap would "hit doctors in training, surgeons and doctors in remote areas the hardest". He disputed Treasury's assertion that self-education expenses tended to include skiing holidays and fancy hotels.

ASMI backs Chubb's call

The Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute (AMSI) has issued a statement strongly backing the new Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Strategy launched by Australia's Chief Scientist.

In an address to the National Press Club, Australia's Chief Scientist, Professor Ian Chubb, unveiled a strategy that calls for "A Better Australia"—where there is a widespread increase in STEM literacy throughout the community — by the year 2025.

AMSI Director, Prof. Geoff Prince, has welcomed the new strategy. In particular he warns of the urgency needed in addressing the decline in maths and stats literacy in the Australian community.

AMSI notes that Professor Chubb agrees with US counterparts: "No entity as vast, interconnected, and diverse as the science and engineering enterprise can successfully operate on autopilot perpetually." And it strongly supports the Chief Scientist's call for a national STEM policy and an enhanced PMSEIC to oversee it.

In the statement Prof. Prince argued that: "In a federation like Australia there is an even greater need for such a policy. We already suffer because school and university education come under different jurisdictions—with a real STEM policy we would identify the endemic shortage of maths teachers in each state for what it is: a national shortage of maths graduates."

AMSI's discipline profile found that the number of high-school teachers teaching mathematics out of field (this means they are not qualified to teach mathematics) rose from 47% in 2007 to 52.8% in 2010. "For Australia to remain globally competitive our school children need to be inspired by teachers passionate about the discipline. A vital part of investment must be included at all levels of the STEM enterprise: from early childhood education through to innovative research," Prof. Prince said.

- In 2010 the Australian Industry group said more than 75% of employers responding to a survey reported that their businesses were affected by low levels of literacy and numeracy.
- Brick laying apprentices within a regional TAFE showed that 75% could not do basic arithmetic such as adding numbers with decimals or subtraction requiring 'borrowings'. Of those apprentices, 80% could not calculate the area of a rectangle, or the pay owed for working four and a half hours. And 20% could not interpret

millimetre measurements from a centimetre/imperial calibrated tape measure.

- The number of graduates in mathematical science degrees is also about half the OECD average.
- In 2006, The National Strategic Review of Mathematical Sciences research in Australia reported that Australian CEOs said that graduates from science, engineering and allied degrees did not have the necessary maths skills for the positions they applied for.

For more information, access: http://www.the-funneled-web.com/

Going for a century

According to survey research, most of us do not want to live to 100. However, Associate, Professor Heather Booth has been looking at Australians' chances of living to 100, and beyond.

Most people tend to think of ill-health and disability rather than the excitement of achieving more in their lifetime and witnessing the amazing new developments that the future has in store. When asked how long they think they will live, half of 50 to 89–year–old respondents gave an age between 80 and 90 years, with an average of 85 years.

After taking current age into account, respondents with greater life expectations tended to enjoy better self-rated health and mental health and tended to have more parents alive. They were also less likely to lack companionship and more likely to go to social activities. Those with lower life expectations tended to strongly agree that they have all the friends they want or need, or that people don't seem to like them very much.

The results showed that social networks' play a significant role in living a longer life, underlining the importance of developing and maintaining social networks.

So, what are our chances of living to 100?

At birth, a baby boomer boy born in 1950 had a 3 in 100 chance of celebrating his 100th birthday. This probability has increased only marginally to date, and by the time he is 80 (in 2030) it will reach four in 100. Only when he is 95 will his chances exceed 20 in 100; and at 99 he still has only 2:1 odds of reaching his century: a rather rare event, and even rarer for those who are centenarians today.

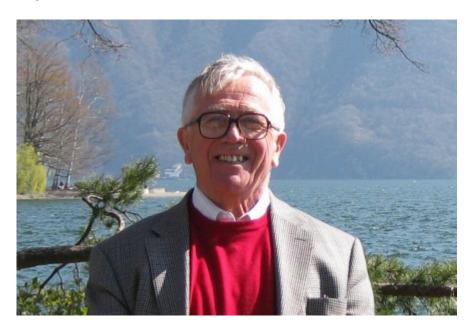
At least 25 Australians have lived to 110 or older—the first to reach 110 was in 1971, and numbers have increased since then. The oldest-ever Australian, Christina Cock, lived to 114 years.

In 2009, Australia boasted some 2,700 centenarians. This number will reach 18,300 in 2029 and about 60,000 in 2050. Proportionally, centenarians will increase from about 120 per million today to 1,500 per million in 2050: still a rare event.

Heather Booth is Associate Professor of demography at the <u>Australian Demographic and</u> Social Research Institute in the ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences.

Associate Professor Booth delivered her findings on the prospect of the century at the <u>Canberra Centenarians</u>: Statistics, Science and Stories of Living to 100 forum held at ANU on August 2.

Royal Medal for remarkable mathematician



Emeritus Professor Rodney Baxter (above) has been awarded a Royal Society's Royal Medal for his breakthrough work in mathematical physics.

Professor Baxter, who retired in 2003 after almost 35 years at ANU, says he was very pleased to receive the news, which he almost mistook for junk mail.

"The news came in the form of a letter from the Royal Society and when I saw it on my desk I just put it in my pocket thinking 'oh, it's just another circular,' " he says. "So I was carrying it around for a couple of hours before I actually read it."

Professor Baxter, who is "still doing his sums" 10 years after retirement, was chosen as a Royal Medallist for his "remarkable" contribution to the field of statistical mechanics.

"Statistical mechanics is about the way atoms behave when they're together," he explains. "Water is water is water, but it's also steam and ice. The only difference is if it's cold it likes to huddle together in the form of a solid, and when you boil water it expands.

"So I've spent my career trying to come up with models that explain phase transitions. I'm trying to provide a pathway between the theory and the experimental evidence.

"I came up with the 'Hard Hexagon Model' in 1984 to explain how helium is absorbed on to graphite, which was later compared with experimental data and found to be quite accurate."

Professor Baxter says he ended up in statistical mechanics by chance, when an intriguing question caught his attention.

"I was beavering away in particle field theory for my PhD," he says. "But I happened to read a paper by Andrew Lenard in which he'd solved a one-dimensional model in statistical mechanics of a Coulomb gas of electrons and protons—in the paper he made an intriguing

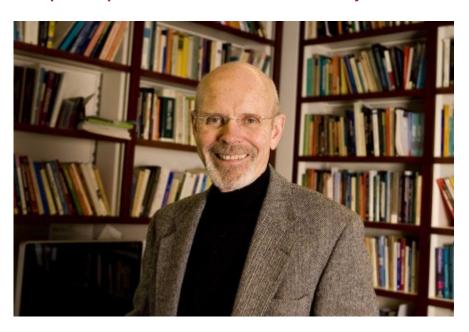
remark that he was having trouble with electrons in a neutralizing charge background. That really sucked me in, so I sat down and solved it in a couple of months."

Professor Baxter and his wife will travel to London—his birth place—for the Royal Society Awards presentation in November. It will not be his first time at the Royal Society headquarters—he was admitted as a fellow there in 1982.

"It does ring nice bells," he says. "I'm planning to send an email to my old director of studies at Cambridge to say I'd like to come and see him while I'm over there."

The Royal Medals, also known as Queen's Medals, were founded by King George IV in 1825 and are awarded to three outstanding academics each year. The silver gilt medals are accompanied by a gift of £5,000.

ANU philosopher admitted to British Academy



Professor Philip Pettit (above) has joined a long linage of esteemed academics including John Maynard Keynes and CS Lewis following his admission into the British Academy.

Professor Pettit was among fifteen fellows from outside the UK to be invited into Britain's most distinguished national body for the humanities and social sciences.

"I was very pleased and a little bit surprised," Professor Pettit said. "It's really quite amazing. I'm the third person from the ANU School of Philosophy to be admitted into the Academy. It must be the only department in the world outside the UK to have that many."

Professor Pettit's career began in Ireland where he studied classics before discovering a passion for philosophy. He recalls, "Somebody told me about a subject where you could ask questions about free will, whether there was a god, and what is right and wrong," he said. "I thought—that's what I want to do."

An enduring fascination with some of life's most puzzling questions took him from Dublin to Cambridge and then across the ocean to ANU in 1983. He currently splits his time between Princeton University, where he has taught political theory and philosophy since 2002, and ANU. In 2010 he won a Guggenheim Fellowship and spent 2010 —11 as a fellow of the

Centre for Advanced Study in the Behavioural and Social Sciences at Stanford University. He has published widely in the fields of moral and political theory, philosophy of the mind and metaphysics, and said the time he spends at ANU keeps him on his toes.

"The most exciting part of my career has been coming to ANU and becoming part of the Australian philosophy scene," he said. "There's a wonderful trend of doing philosophy in a really upfront way; you admit to your ignorance and the things that puzzle you.

"I had begun to tire of philosophy and it really put the wind back in my sails. It's like the Piccadilly Circus because every philosopher wants to get to ANU at some stage in their career. It's absolutely outstanding by anyone's standards."

Early retirement attracts inquiries

Since the announcement of the voluntary early retirement scheme on 1 July, Human Resources have received over 200 enquiries about the scheme; one quarter of these enquiries have come from academic staff, and three quarters have come from professional staff.

More information sessions are scheduled for coming weeks and local area sessions are also being coordinated. Registration for future sessions will be posted on the <u>website</u> soon.

The budget solutions <u>website</u> is in the process of being updated and will include an online calculator and a list of frequently asked questions. All enquiries can be directed to <u>earlyretirement@anu.edu.au</u>

Social media in academia

Tom Worthington is the speaker at this week's <u>ANU Collegiate Lunch</u> in Canberra on 7 August 2013, with the topic *What can the 'social media' do for us?*" He will lead the discussion. He writes:

The "us" in this case is academia. For those at university, the idea of virtual communities should not be a new one. Academics have used publications, correspondence and meetings to keep in touch with remote colleagues. Use of the Internet and the web has made this scholarly communication easier. At the same time the cheaper and easier access to information has challenged the role of the university and of the academic.

In the past academics were rated on their ability to get information published, but now anyone can publish and read for almost free on-line. You don't have to visit a university to read a journal and don't have to have the instruction behind you to have your work published.

Creating and maintaining virtual communities still required effort and also new skills. I am frequently asked how "young people", "students" and "early career academics" can be encouraged to take part in events. The concern is that these people are not coming to old fashioned lectures, seminars, symposium, meetings and conferences.

My preferred solution to the problem of a lack of attendance is to "flip" the event. The term comes from the "*flipped classroom*", where students study the material on their own and then get together in a classroom for group activities. The idea is that group time is too valuable to be wasted on everyone just passively listening to one person talking.

Research shows that student learn much better when actively engaged in doing something.

Presumably this also applies to academic discourse. Rather than just sitting in the conference listening, they can be doing something active.

A new mode for conferences is to provide the papers and presentations in advance. The face-to-face time of the conference (if there is one) can then be mostly devoted to discussion. An example of this is the "Global Conference on Research Integration and Implementation". This will be held at the ANU in Canberra, 8 to 11 September 2013, but posters for the event are already up on-line.

Even when there is a formal presentation, the audience can be discussing the topic on-line at the same time. Some of the "Bar Camp" style events I attend have a twitter hash tag for the conference and encourage delegates to use it during presentations. This can be confronting for the presenter, who may have a display of the stream of discussion appearing behind them, as they speak. But this does make for a livelier format.

It needs to be kept in mind that using social media requires some practice and considerable effort. It is a mistake to assume you can simply create a Twitter hash tag and the job is done. Also the aim and measures of success need to be adjusted. Having an on-line discussion may attract people to a face-to-face event, but some will be happy with just the on-line component and not turn up.

The rapid pace of on-line discussion can be frightening for those used to the leisurely pace of paper correspondence and annual conferences. If you advise something is available online, you had better make sure it is, or there will be complaints. It is very easy to leave the discussion on a Friday afternoon and find on Monday morning that chaos has broken out over the weekend.

Pia Waugh at the Department of Finance initiated two short courses for public servants on "<u>Online engagement</u>". I talked at one of these and the same tools and techniques are applicable to universities. Also there is much in common with on-line teaching. But it can be difficult to convince academics that they need to learn how to communicate, so I have proposed we get them while they are young and <u>teach professional on-line skills to postgraduate students</u>.

Law reform and native title

Professor Lee Godden, of the Melbourne University Law School has been appointed to head the Australian Law Reform Commission inquiry into specific areas of native title law.

Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus QC and Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs Jenny Macklin also announced the final terms of reference for the ALRC's Australian Law inquiry into specific areas of native title law. This follows the release in June of draft terms of reference for public consultation.

Professor Godden is the Director of the Centre for Resources, Energy and Environmental Law at the Melbourne Law School, the University of Melbourne. Currently, she is engaged in research on indigenous peoples' land tenure issues in Australia, Malaysia, the South Pacific, and internationally. She is part of the Agreements, Treaties and Negotiated Settlements Project Team at the University of Melbourne which is undertaking the Australian Research Council Linkage Project, 'Poverty in the Midst of Plenty: Economic Empowerment, Wealth Creation and Institutional Reform for Sustainable Indigenous and Local Communities'. Her interests include indigenous peoples' land rights and native title, environmental law, natural resources law, and property law; having conducted studies in Australia and overseas jurisdictions. She has a long-standing record of publication in native title law and been

awarded grants from organisations, such as the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.

The Government has asked the Commission to examine two specific areas and consider what changes could be made to improve the operation of Commonwealth native title laws and legal frameworks:

- Connection requirements, and
- Authorisation and joinder provisions of the *Native Title Act 1993* (these provisions can significantly affect the timely and effective resolution of native title claims).

Mr Dreyfus said, "This inquiry, together with the review into the roles and functions of native title organisations currently underway by Deloitte Access Economics, will ensure that the native title system continues to meet the needs of indigenous people well into the future. Stakeholders will have opportunities to put their views forward on these issues as part of the Commission's inquiry."

Global conference

ANU will play host to the First Global Conference on Research Integration and Implementation from September 8 –11, 2013.

The conference, which can also be accessed online, will be supplemented by three coconferences taking place in Germany, The Netherlands and Uruguay.

Conference chair Professor Gabriele Bammer, who is also Director of the Research School of Population Health and leader of the ARC Centre of Excellence in Policing and Security's Integration and Implementation Program, says the conference has a number of unique attributes.

"We are bringing together several of professional communities that have intersecting interests, but don't normally talk to each other. We're linking systems thinkers, implementation scientists, inter- and trans-disciplinarians, action researchers, project managers, complexity scientists, knowledge brokers and many more to share methodologies for addressing complex real-world problems."

The conference focuses on methodology rather than any particular type of problem. Relevant cases come from fields as diverse as planning for cities of the future, obesity prevention and protecting marine resources.

"A challenge with bringing so many groups together is giving everyone space on the program," Professor Bammer says.

"We have 16 plenary talks, a panel and a debate. And instead of inviting registrants to submit papers, we've set up a unique digital poster system. That means that submissions are available for viewing and comment before, during and after the conference."

Information about the conference, registration and the digital poster system is available at www.i2sconference.org

IT pricing report released

The House of Representatives Infrastructure and Communications Committee has released the report on its inquiry into claims that Australians pay higher prices for IT products than consumers overseas do.

Committee chair Nick Champion MP said "The committee found that big IT companies and copyright holders charge Australians, on average, an extra 50 per cent, a practice consumers call the 'Australia Tax'. High IT prices can have significant impacts given the critical role IT plays in many areas of Australian life.

"While companies should remain free to set their own prices, the committee took the view that there are a number of ways in which Australia can act to increase competition in IT markets, which should reduce prices over time," Mr Champion said.

Key recommendations in the report include:

- a consumer education campaign, to help consumers find cheaper goods online reforms to the Competition and Consumer Act and the Copyright Act to remove barriers to competition, foster innovation, and ensure consumer rights are not lost in the transition to digital content.
- action to reduce the impact of high prices on Australia's most vulnerable social groups
 the disabled, students, and low-income Australians.

The report is available from the committee website at http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary Business/Committees/House of Representatives Committees?url=ic/itpricing/report.htm.

Recent publications

Recent publications distributed in parliament include:

Strategy: *Terms of Engagement*—Australia's regional defence diplomacy, by Dr Sam Bateman, Dr Anthony Bergin and Ms Hayley Channer. Published by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute www.aspi.org.au

Key Health Issues for the Federal Election 2013 published by the Australian Medical Association www.ama.com.au

Open House on the hill

Visitors to Parliament House in Canberra will have the rare chance to tour the Prime Minister's office and the offices of the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives as part of this year's packed program for Open Day on Saturday, 24 August 2013.

Senate President John Hogg and House of Representatives Speaker Anna Burke have launched the 25th Anniversary Open Day program, which includes tours, displays, entertainment and activities to engage the community with the work of our national parliament.

The theme of this year's Open Day is 'Threads of our nation', with the program focusing on how architecture, art, culture, history and, of course, politics come together to create the building's unique identity.

Senate President John Hogg said the Open Day will be a fantastic opportunity for Australians to see how the parliament operates and what makes the building tick. "In particular we would like to extend a special invitation for people who contributed to the construction and work of this building over the past 25 years to come back with their families and join in the celebration of our democracy, symbolised here at Parliament House," he said.

House of Representatives Speaker Anna Burke announced that visitors to the building on 24 August would be given the rare opportunity to see up close the historic House of Representatives Mace—the first time it has been made available for public viewing outside of the parliamentary chamber.

"The building was conceived as a contemporary home for our national parliament but also links to the history of our democracy," Ms Burke said. "Our Open Day will be a showcase of how our past has helped to shape our future."

A range of artists will be talking about the contributions they have made to the building through their artworks. Visitors will also be able to walk on the floor of the House of Representatives and Senate chambers and see the various unique areas of the building.

The winners of a national 'My First Speech' competition for Year 10 to 12 students will present their speeches and there will also be the inaugural Speaker's University Challenge that will see two university teams debate whether the House is representative.

Entertainment throughout the day will draw on the themes of the building and will include performances from indigenous singer Dewayne Everettsmith, as well as Franklyn B Paverty (who performed at the original opening of Parliament House in 1988) and other local artists.

The program is available at the 25th anniversary website at **25***years.aph.gov.au*

Diary dates

Aug 7 Wed 12.30. Collegiate Lunch discussion on "What can the 'social media' do for us?" led by Tom Worthington (ANU College of Engineering and Computer Science) **Aug 20** TUESDAY 16.00. Lecture: "Fred Ward: designer extraordinary". Derek Wrigley (ANUEF).

Sept 3 Lecture by Jeremy Harding—cancelled

Sept 4 Wed - Collegiate lunch—discussion leader TBA

Sept 18 Wed 16.00. Lecture: "Writing about the sex lives of Australians" Frank Bongiorno ANUEF Molony Room

Oct 2 Collegiate lunch TBA

Oct 3 Lecture "Dog days: Challenges facing Australia after the resources boom". Ross Garnaut (Copland Theatre 6pm).

Oct 10/11 Fenner Symposium: "Population, resources and climate change" (Australian academy of Science).

Oct 15 Lecture: "Future of Australian Higher Education" Simon Marginson (TBA).

Oct 16 Lecture: "TBA" David Williams (ANUEF).

Nov 6 Collegiate lunch TBA

Nov 20 Lecture: "TBA" Larry Sitsky (ANUEF).

Dec 6 Collegiate lunch TBA

Dec 18 AGM and Christmas party (ANUEF).

Note that each of the Collegiate lunches is organised in the month before it occurs, so that topical subjects can be chosen.

Additional dates

August 10 — 18 10am till late National Science Week; Enquiries: <u>info.discovery@csiro.au</u> or 02 6246 4646

August 18 1:30pm — 5pm <u>2003 Canberra Fires 10 years after: What have we learned?</u> Free at Lecture theatre, CSIRO Discovery Centre, North Science Rd, Acton ACT 2601

August 17, 12:30 pm —12:30 pm

Bernard Fennessy Memorial Lecture 2013 & Centenary Chat

Dr Lyn Hinds 'Managing Vertebrate Pests—Who is Outsmarting Whom'

ANUEF Room Bookings

Requests for booking the Molony Room should be addressed to Judith Caton via email, and these will be forwarded to the committee for approval, and then entered into the diary. A return email will be sent to the organisation confirming the booking. The diary will be held in the office rather than being left on the table in the meeting room. Conditions for the use of the premises will be emailed to users and a copy is on the ANUEF website.

Contact Judith Caton on judith.caton@anu.edu.au

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

Next edition of *Emeritus*, the ANUEF Newsletter, will be published in September 2013.