

SAM



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SYDNEY

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WELCOME TO YOUR NEW-LOOK **SYDNEY ALUMNI MAGAZINE**
WHERE WE SHARE THE STORIES OF OUR ALUMNI AND THE
DIFFERENCE THEY MAKE TO THE WORLD.



SAM celebrates the University of Sydney community – those who follow their passions, challenge the status quo and inspire others.

Within these pages you will read about alumni who are fighting ebola, tackling mental health problems in young people and transforming Sydney’s built environment. Lawyer, academic and activist Noel Pearson argues the case for constitutional reform, and we find out how much has changed for Aboriginal people in the 50 years since the first Freedom Ride.

With such wonderful stories to tell, it’s important that the magazine itself is engaging. It gives us great pleasure to welcome you to a redesigned *SAM*, with compelling content that we hope will keep you reading about your fellow alumni and the University.

As part of this new approach, *SAM* will now be published twice a year, in April and October, and will be complemented by a new interactive e-newsletter that will feature news and information about events and people. The first edition will be delivered to your inbox early next month.

We hope you enjoy your new *SAM*, and would love to hear your feedback.



Belinda Hutchinson AM,
Chancellor
BEc Sydney, FCA



Dr Michael Spence,
Vice-Chancellor
and Principal
BA LLB Sydney DPhil
PGDipTheol Oxf

Please send your feedback to:
sam@sydney.edu.au

Honour our extraordinary alumni

Every day our alumni are making a remarkable difference and enriching the lives of others. We invite you to recognise their achievements by nominating them for an Alumni Award.

With a wide range of categories, the awards honour alumni who are established in their careers and those who have recently finished their studies. Nominations close on 15 May 2015.

Find out more at
sydney.edu.au/alumni/awards

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Publishing Editor
Michael Visontay
The University of Sydney,
Level 7, JFR Building, NSW 2006
02 9036 6372
sam@sydney.edu.au

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BEFORE YOUR NEXT GLASS

Drinkers have long toasted the health benefits of moderate alcohol intake, but a new study published in the *British Medical Journal* pours cold water on the idea.

The study challenges claims that moderate drinking is good for your health and reveals that the protective benefits from moderate alcohol consumption have been overestimated or exaggerated by previous research.

One of the study's authors, Associate Professor Emmanuel Stamatakis, from the Faculty of Health Sciences, says the research has important public health implications. "A large number of studies have suggested that moderate consumption of alcohol may protect against cardiovascular disease and this has become accepted wisdom," he says.

"The message to drinkers has been 'don't feel guilty about a few glasses of vino

after work each night: a regular dose of alcohol is better for you than none at all'.

"But this new research sheds doubt on the belief that alcohol has robust benefits and that there is a 'healthy' dose.

"Our study found that once ex-drinkers – who may have quit due to alcohol-related health issues or abstain due to poor health in general – were removed from the pool of non-drinkers, the protective benefits of alcohol for moderate drinkers virtually disappeared and there was little to no protection provided by alcohol consumption at any level.

"The message from this study is Australians should not use claims of alcohol's health benefits as a licence to drink, and the alcohol industry should not use health-related messages to promote its products."



GALLIPOLI ON STAGE

Clem Gorman's (BA '67) play *Gallipoli 2015: A Manual of Trench Warfare* (1979) is touring nationally in this centenary year. The drama takes place in a sandbagged trench at Gallipoli and puts a perspective on the Great War's legend of heroism. The main character is Barry Moon, a country boy battling not only the enemy, but himself and the establishment.

Dates can be found at www.davidspicer.com.au

UNIVERSITY AND THE WAR

Do you have information and stories about the University and the Great War?

Our online database of students, alumni and staff who fought in the Great War, *Beyond 1914*, contains the biographical entries from the University World War 1 Book of Remembrance and other archival material. However, it does not contain the complete record for each entry. We are looking for family members and the public to fill in the gaps.

Please see www.sydney.edu.au/beyond1914



AUSTRALIA'S BEACH ROMANCE

Historian Caroline Ford has been writing and researching the history of Sydney's beaches and Australian beach culture since 2001. She completed her PhD at the University of Sydney in 2007 and has worked as a history researcher with the Surf Lifesaving Association as well as for the NSW government in heritage and policy. She is an honorary associate of the University of Sydney's Department of History.

Sydney Beaches (NewSouth Books, 2014) tells the story of how Sydneysiders developed their love of the beach – from the 19th century picnickers to the surfing and sunbaking pioneers a century later.

Sydney's beaches also have another history, one that is lesser known and more intriguing. Our world-famous beach culture only exists because the first beachgoers demanded important rights. Ford's book tells the story of the battle for the beaches as well as the story of how a city developed a relationship with its coast and a nation created a culture.

LET YOUR BRAINWAVES DO THE PAINTING



It sounds like a dream for arty types who can't be bothered picking up a brush: painting with your mind. Last November a group of students from the University created Mind Paintings, an interactive project that reads brainwaves and enables people to "paint with their mind".

Users are equipped with a wireless device and a wearable headset that picks up their electroencephalogram (EEG), measuring the brain's electrical signals. The alpha and beta waves, which record a person's attention and meditation levels, are then translated into abstract digital paintings.

In a live installation at Broadway's Central retail precinct, visitors had the opportunity to sit inside a "meditative pyramid" and watch their brainwaves paint live before their eyes on a massive digital display. Their levels of stress and relaxation, picked up through brain activity, were reflected in the final digital painting.

The University of Sydney project was led by Dr Caitilin de Bérigny, a lecturer in the Master of Interaction Design and Electronic Arts program, and international lighting designer Bruce Ramus.

"For the first time, we can get a creative glimpse of a person's state of mind. The more meditative and relaxed the state of a person, the greater the visual impact on the digital canvas," Dr de Bérigny says.

"The project transgresses the boundaries between the physical and the virtual. Thought becomes visual, mood becomes art, inside becomes outside. It shows us the potential that interactive technology can play."

KEEP CALM AND AVOID A HEART ATTACK

Losing your temper is not just a social hazard. It's also a health risk, with new research showing that the chance of a heart attack is 8.5 times higher in the two hours after a burst of intense anger.

In the first Australian study to investigate the link between acute emotional triggers and high risk of severe cardiac episodes, researchers found that "episodes of intense anger can act as a trigger for a heart attack", says lead author Dr Thomas Buckley from the University of Sydney Nursing School who is also a researcher at Royal North Shore Hospital.

"The data shows that the higher risk of a heart attack isn't necessarily just while you're angry – it lasts for two hours after the outburst," Dr Buckley says. "The triggers for these bursts of intense anger were associated with: arguments with family members (29 per cent); arguments with others (42 per cent); work anger (14 per cent); and driving anger (14 per cent)."

The data also reveals that anxiety can also raise the risk of a heart attack. High levels of anxiety were associated with a 9.5-fold increased risk of triggering a heart attack in the two hours after the anxiety episode, Dr Buckley says.

The study, published in February in *European Heart Journal: Acute Cardiovascular Care*, involved investigating consecutive patients suspected of heart attack and confirmed by angiography reports at Royal North Shore Hospital. "Our findings highlight the need to consider strategies to protect individuals most at risk during times of acute anger," Dr Buckley adds.

Senior author Professor Geoffrey Tofler, of the University's Department of Preventive Cardiology, says: "Potential preventive approaches may be stress-reduction training to reduce the frequency and intensity of episodes of anger, or avoiding activities that usually prompt such intense reactions – for instance, avoiding an angry confrontation or activity that provokes intense anxiety.

"Our message to people is they need to be aware that a burst of severe anger or anxiety could lead to a coronary event, so consider preventive strategies where possible," Professor Tofler says.



ON MY MIND: NOEL PEARSON

The Indigenous rights advocate (BA '87, LLB '93) discusses how our Constitution should give formal recognition to Aboriginal people.

I remember wandering the corridors of opportunity at Sydney University during my bachelor studies in the 1980s. I believe I was one of only a couple of Aboriginal students on campus.

Things have certainly changed. Across universities Australia wide, there are many more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students undertaking tertiary education. A variety of programs exist to create opportunities and foster their inclusion and academic success.

The nation at large has followed a similar path towards greater inclusion.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were excluded from the constitutional arrangements of 1901. The drafters of the Constitution included no Aboriginal people. In some states, Aboriginal people could not vote. As a result, the Constitution that unified the colonies into a single federation failed in an important sense to unify its peoples.

Section 127 excluded Indigenous people from being counted in the Census. Section 51(xxvi), the “race power”, excluded Aboriginal people from

the scope of federal legislative power. It was felt that Aboriginal people were a dying “race” whose welfare should be left to the states.

The 1967 referendum removed these explicit exclusions from the Constitution but also left unresolved issues. Outdated “race” clauses remain. Section 25 talks about barring races from voting. The race power, while it no longer excludes Aboriginal people, remains a power open to positive or adverse use. That is the first problem: our Constitution still allows and promotes racial discrimination.

The second problem is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are still in no way recognised. Australia’s constitutional arrangements reflect and recognise our British heritage, traditions and institutions. Yet it remains silent on the fact that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were here before British settlement and remain as distinct peoples within Australian citizenship.

To this proposition it may be objected that no section of the Australian population should

be specifically recognised. We are all citizens after all, and that is what is important. Every person has an equal say through their equal vote. And Aboriginal people now have the same say as anyone else.

This is correct if all we focus on is the individual and if our approach is one of strict majoritarianism. Yet the founding fathers themselves did not strictly adhere to this principle when drafting the Constitution. We operate under federalism. Even the smallest minority colonies were recognised as states in the federal structure and constitutionally guaranteed an equal number of senators.

The states were considered historically, politically and geographically distinct polities worthy of constitutional recognition and a guaranteed voice in the political processes of Parliament. This was not seen as contrary to majoritarian democracy. Rather, it created a democratic guard against the unrestrained tyranny of the majority.

Aboriginal people also comprise a historically, politically and often geographically distinct polity within Australia. This is evident in the constitutional history. We are the only group that was dispossessed by British settlement and the establishment of the nation. We were uniquely excluded by the constitutional arrangements of 1901.

We are the only group that has particular interests arising from this history. We are therefore the only group requiring legislative responses to this unique history – for example, Native Title and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection legislation – and the only group requiring a specific Commonwealth

head of power for this purpose. Aboriginal people comprise only three percent of the population. We often struggle to be heard by Parliament, even on matters directly affecting us.

Just as the minority states are guaranteed a fair say, it would make sense for Aboriginal people to be guaranteed, in the Constitution, a fair say in legislation relating to Aboriginal people. I am not talking about reserved Senate seats for Aboriginal people – I am wary of the political difficulty of such a constitutional change.

The Constitution could be amended to create an Aboriginal body to consult with and advise

Parliament on matters affecting Aboriginal interests. The advice should not be binding; it cannot be a veto. It must not compromise parliamentary sovereignty.

But it should be a handsomely drafted, procedural amendment to the Constitution to guarantee that Aboriginal people get a fair say in the laws and policies made about them.

Such an amendment could do what the founding fathers failed to do in 1901. It would

provide practical recognition and inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the procedures of government.

It is often said that the Constitution is a rule book, governing important national power relationships, such as that between the Commonwealth and the states. The Constitution should properly address the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and government so that it is inclusive and just. It should make provision for Aboriginal people to be heard in Aboriginal affairs.



Noel Pearson delivers his eulogy for Gough Whitlam, Nov 2014. Photo: Peter Rae, Fairfax Media

ON MY DESK: DUNCAN IVISON

The Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences shares the stories behind the small things that matter in his office.

Photography by Victoria Baldwin



AMERICAN BASEBALL

I am a huge baseball fan; I grew up following the Montreal Expos, which sadly don't exist anymore. Not enough locals supported the team so the owner moved it to Washington. When I am trying to figure things out, I bounce a ball in my hands. It's kind of a thinking tool. In other offices, I would bounce it off the wall.



POSTCARD OF ROUSSEAU

"I read *Discourse on Inequality*, in French, by Swiss political philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau in my first year, in 1983. I found it completely electrifying. He captured my teenage imagination and is partly responsible for where I am today. He was insane but he reminds me of the intensity of my subject. I bought this card for 50p at the National Gallery in London in 1990. It's a bit of a talisman and has been on my desk since I was a PhD student.

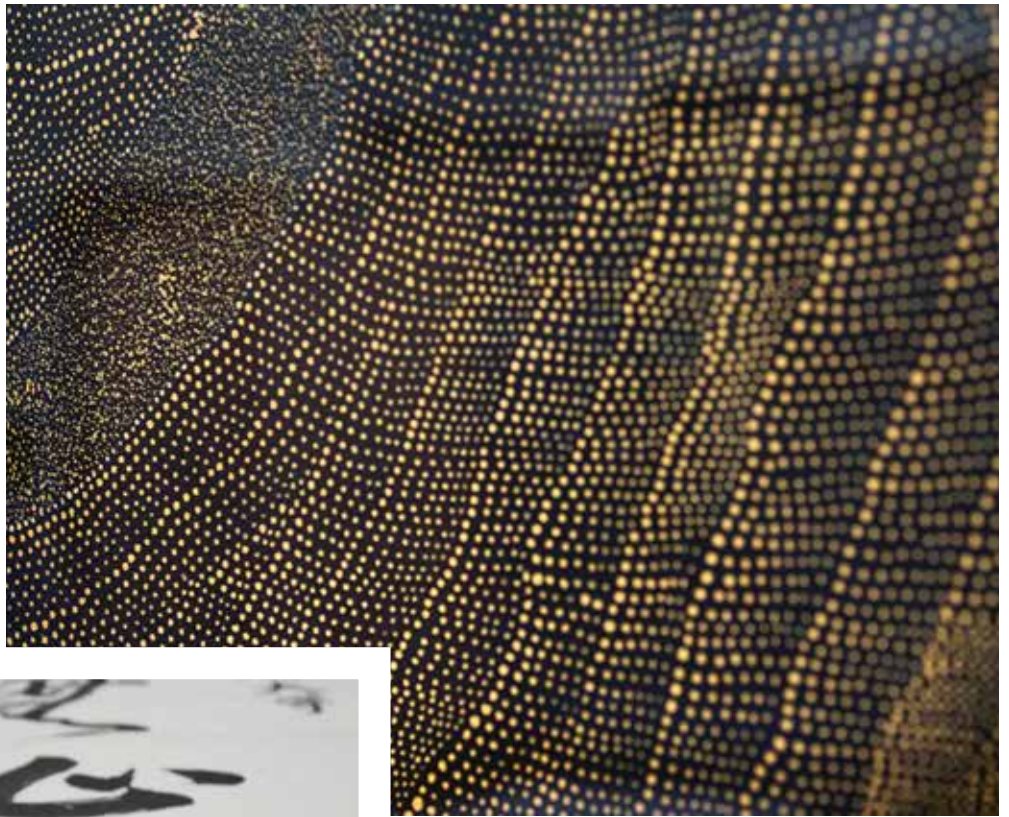


ICE HOCKEY PUCK

I grew up in Montreal and have always supported my sporting teams from afar. The puck was given to me by a friend when I first left the northern hemisphere for Australia. He said: "This is to remind you what winter is all about."

CHINESE SCROLL

This is a gift from Chinese scholar Li Yao after he received an Honorary Doctorate of Literature in 2013. The scroll translates into “There is no boundary in the ocean of knowledge”. Li has almost single-handedly introduced Australian literature to China through translating masters such as Patrick White and Alexis Wright’s *Carpentaria*, which chronicles Aboriginal life in the north. He was just enormously grateful for the degree. But we should also be grateful to him for transmitting our culture into the most populous country on earth. The humanities is such a powerful force in culture and in how knowledge is transmitted.



ON MY WALL

When I became Dean I was taken down to the bowels of the storeroom and asked which artwork I would like to hang on my wall. I saw *Thorny Devil Lizard Dreaming* by Kathleen Petyarre (1999) and it just mesmerised me. There is not a day in the office when I don’t find something new in it.

EDMUND BURKE

My favourite book is Edmund Burke’s *Collected Works*, which was given to me by my grandfather. Burke has followed me around – they are books I would never want to part with. I also like the fact that Burke and Rousseau were great adversaries.



Follow Duncan
on Twitter
[@duncanivison](https://twitter.com/duncanivison)



Professor Ian Hickie and Dr Benjamin Veness discuss how to tackle the challenge of mental health problems among young people.



Youth mental health: the truth

What are some common misconceptions associated with youth mental illness?

Hickie: Chief among the misconceptions is that mental health problems among young people are trivial, brief and unlikely to have much long-term impact on their lives. Other misconceptions include: that most of the problems are due to new drugs, alcohol or other self-induced harms; that most of the treatments the health system provides are drug treatments; and finally, that young people are not likely to kill themselves or cause other serious harm.

Veness: Perhaps the most common misperception is that youth are not sufficiently engaged with the topic of mental illness. During my five years on campus at Sydney, I frequently discussed the topic of mental health with other students, and every single time it was met with a serious and considered reception. It is the rare exception for a student not to have either experienced a mental health problem or know someone else who has.

What can we do to tackle these misconceptions?

Hickie: We can start by sharing real evidence about the facts. For instance, that 75 percent of serious mental disorders start before the age of 25. We can also share real personal stories – not only of tragedies but also of successful treatments and recovery.

Veness: It would be great to see the leaders of all universities in Australia explicitly recognise the significance of mental health as a problem affecting their students' learning and wellbeing. There are more than one million university students in Australia. These at-risk youth are right in front of our noses. Universities such as Sydney boast world-leading public health faculties, so why aren't we putting their expertise to use for the benefit of our own students?

What attitudes need to change in our society?

Hickie: People need to understand that mental health is just as important as physical health, and that medical and psychological treatments for mental health problems are just as helpful as most treatments for physical health problems. More broadly, the public needs to learn that getting treatment early is just as helpful for mental health as it is for other diseases.

Veness: Broadly, mental health problems still suffer from a stigma that no physical health problem carries, except perhaps for obesity and HIV/AIDS. The imperative is not just to combat this stigma, but to work actively to promote positive mental health. What if the University aimed to have every graduate leave our campus healthier, in both a mental and physical sense, than when they arrived? How would that affect the way we design our environment, student services and curricula?

What is the role of government in addressing this?

Hickie: Government can introduce policies to increase funding support for psychological care, increase support for community and home-based care systems, and support young people to move from illness back to education and work.

Veness: In 2011, the World Economic Forum declared that mental health conditions are the greatest threat to global gross domestic product, ahead of any other type of health condition. Ultimately, much of the cost of ill-health in Australian society is borne by government, so it has a huge vested interest in preventing the development of mental illness.

How can researchers and educators best lead change?

Hickie: We can lead by providing accurate and informed descriptions of treatments that work, and by developing new ways to empower young people to get care. In this context, the internet and other technology-led innovations are the future. We need to be at the forefront of developing and evaluating these new approaches.

Veness: In Australia, we have no clear institutional leader on student mental health, but the building blocks are there. We have high public awareness of mental health; we arguably lead in the development of online interventions; stigma-free clinics like headspace are ripe for trial on our campuses. A university like Sydney could leverage our research strength to run the kind of sophisticated intervention studies that might finally shed some light on what can stave off mental illness. A major philanthropic commitment would be a great, though not essential, help in getting it off the ground.

Professor Ian Hickie is the Executive Director of the Brain and Mind Research Institute. Dr Benjamin Veness (MBBS '14, MPH '14) was awarded the Edmund Barton Medal and a Churchill Fellowship in 2013 to investigate student mental health overseas.

Follow on Twitter
Ian: @ian_hickie
Benjamin: @venessb



As the Con celebrates its centenary, pianist Gerard Willems and percussionist Amy Vitucci reflect on their experience of studying 50 years apart.

Encore, encore

Written by Michael Visontay
Photography by Victoria Baldwin

When Gerard Willems came to study at the Conservatorium of Music in 1965, it was more like a lifeline than an education.

The young student had been living with his family in a migrant hostel in Wollongong, NSW, since arriving from Holland in 1958, and there was not much stimulation for a boy whose family was steeped in music.

“The Conservatorium was like a cultural oasis in what felt like a cultural desert,” says Willems, who went on to build a distinguished career as a classical pianist and teacher.

“Coming from the dull suburbia of Wollongong to the artistic sensibility of the music world gave me hope. It really was a cultural lifeline.”

Willems spent three years studying at the Con, which was a state school in those days. He speaks with excitement and relish as he looks back on the early days of his life as a classical musician.

“Most of the teachers had a European connection. Whether they were from South Africa or Russia, they had all worked in Europe, they spoke the same musical language I had heard and learned from my family,” he says.

It was more cosmopolitan then, with a rich sense of European musical tradition. “The atmosphere was lovely and intimate,” Willems says. “Every teacher knew every

student. Now, of course, it's a lot bigger – and more international.”

Another difference Willems has observed over the years is that the courses have evolved. “When I began it was much more performance based,” he says. “Today, as it has grown and evolved into a formal tertiary institution, the course has become more academically based.”

After finishing his studies, Willems spent two years in the army in Wagga Wagga in regional NSW, in the musical corps, playing clarinet.

The budding pianist left Australia shortly after to continue his studies in Europe, returning in 1981 when he was offered a casual position teaching piano at the Con. By that time he had a wife and two young children. “It was like giving Australia a second chance,” he recalls. “I never looked back.”

In 1999–2000 Willems became the first Australian pianist to record the full cycle of Beethoven's 32 piano sonatas, which propelled him to the mantle of best-selling classical artist in Australian recording history.

“My position at the Con opened up all sorts of possibilities,” Willems says. “I have been able to do everything that I wanted to do professionally. In fact, I do not feel that I am actually working. My passion is my profession.”



The beat goes on

A half-century after Gerard Willems began his studies, Amy Vitucci represents the modern face of the Con: she has spent the past four years studying percussion, specialising in the marimba (similar to the xylophone but made of wood) and is determined to pursue a solo career playing her instrument in the concert halls of Europe.

Like Willems, Vitucci, 22, grew up in Griffith, a small town in country NSW, where she learned guitar and drums. But that's where the similarity ends. Her family moved to Canberra and she started playing percussion in Year 10, where she fell in love with the marimba.

“The Con can be overwhelming when you arrive,” she says. “It definitely feels like a different world.” While her transition was made smoother by having lived in Canberra, “where I surrounded myself with people interested in music”, the level of musical expectation and other students' skills was daunting.

Previous page: Gerard Willems and Amy Vitucci

Above right: Verbrugghen Hall, Sydney Conservatorium of Music

Opposite: Artist's impression of the Conservatorium

“You meet people who have perfect pitch, which makes you realise you are not the only talented student,” Vitucci says. “Then you have to learn theory, where I wasn’t particularly strong.”

The young percussionist disagrees with Willems’ perceived loss of intimacy in the course today. “Although jazz and classical don’t usually mix very closely (classical students tend to lock themselves away and practise alone), I am good friends with a lot of jazz players,” Vitucci says. “You get to know everyone quite well by the end.”

Vitucci says most of her fellow students are Australian but there are also a few international students, especially in postgraduate percussion.

She hopes this international network will prove helpful when she finishes her degree in six months. “The teachers encourage you to go for auditions when vacancies arise in ensembles such as the Australian Youth Orchestra,” she says. “But there are many more ensembles overseas, which means more opportunities for percussion – and especially for the marimba. There are lots of marimba specialists in Europe and the United States too.”

Yet the marimba may be just the first of several specialties. Ultimately, Vitucci says she wants to do a master’s in music therapy then study medicine, with the aim of combining music therapy and medicine.

A MASS CELEBRATION

The New South Wales Conservatorium of Music, as it was first known, opened its doors on 6 May 1915.

To mark its centenary, the Con will celebrate in the way it does best, with a spectacular program of music.

The centrepiece of the celebrations takes place on 6 May, with a performance of MASS by Leonard Bernstein (perhaps best known for *West Side Story*) at the Sydney Opera House. It will feature more than 400 high school and tertiary students, staff and alumni of the Conservatorium and guest performers from Sydney Children’s Choir.

Bernstein’s MASS was commissioned by Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis in memory of her late husband and former American president, John F Kennedy. It premiered in 1971.

Beyond Bernstein’s MASS on 6 May, there will be a week of centenary concerts from 6–13 October. For more information: music.sydney.edu.au/events/scm-centenary-festival





Andrew Burges drew on his love of beachside pools for an award-winning design of Sydney's largest aquatic centre.

Talent pool

Written by Caroline Baum

Photography by Victoria Baldwin and Peter Bennetts

On his way to work, architect Andrew Burges goes for a swim at Coogee, where he lives, and has a shower at the beach before heading to his office in Surry Hills.

This ritual sluicing in the brine of the Pacific may have helped Burges gain the edge in a fiercely contested competition to design the aquatic centre for Green Square in Sydney's inner suburbs, the newest and largest mixed-use development in Australia.

For 20 years, the former surfer swam at the Bondi Icebergs, giving him ample opportunity to belong to and observe the tribal behaviour of its community, providing vital insights into the way people use a pool for much more than exercise or

recreation. Burges observed that, for many, the pool is as much of a social hub as their local café or library.

One of six children, Sydney-born Burges did not follow his father into the legal profession, choosing architecture without a moment's hesitation after a childhood of drawing and building models. Today, models are still an important feature of his architectural practice, Andrew Burges Architects, established in 2001.

Pinned to the wall and casually littering shelves, they add a three-dimensional, sculptural aspect to the otherwise pristine surfaces of the design studio he shares with his team of five. "I love the physical artefact," Burges concedes,

even though these days most design work is done using software.

Burges remembers his time at Sydney fondly for the intensity of the course. “I found my honours thesis quite a big and lonely commitment but it certainly developed my skills as a writer, which has proved invaluable since.”

Of the tutors who made an impact he cites Neil Durbach, “who brutally upped the standards conceptually”. He also acknowledges the guidance of Sydney academics Jennifer Taylor, Adrian Snodgrass and Swetik Korzeniewski.

Despite being a bookish type (“I read theory for pleasure and went to philosophy lectures,” he confesses somewhat sheepishly), Burges came out of his shell to take part in the satirical *Architectural Review*. “I never imagined myself on stage but found myself in the lead role at four days’ notice!”

His performing streak didn’t last, but his intellectual focus earned him the University Medal in 1992 and not one, but three scholarships to complete a Master of Architecture at Harvard’s Graduate School of Design (which he completed, with distinction, in 1996).

On graduation, at the age of 26, Burges made a precocious impact, winning a major competition to design the Sydney Olympic Village as design architect at Bruce James and Partners. “That was a pinch-me moment,” he says. “In those days, I was like a sponge, soaking up the opportunity but with nothing to lose.”

That early success foreshadowed others in major public works, a strand that has thrived in parallel with residential work, giving Burges the opportunity to alternate between small and large projects.

The aquatic centre clearly holds a special place in Burges’ portfolio. His entry beat 143 others to be selected and is the largest civic project he has undertaken to date, due for completion in late 2019.

Taking inspiration from the sea pools that line the coast, Burges’ concept is an urban rock pool designed to suit mixed use both in and out of the water. There is a 50-metre outdoor lap zone,



together with a 25-metre indoor pool, as well as an asymmetrical water space for those who want to swim without the pressure of being overtaken by those seeking to achieve their personal best in the fast lane. “I wanted to expand the geometry to suit different ages and demographics,” he explains.

Having mapped each meticulously, Burges borrowed distinctive qualities from the city’s

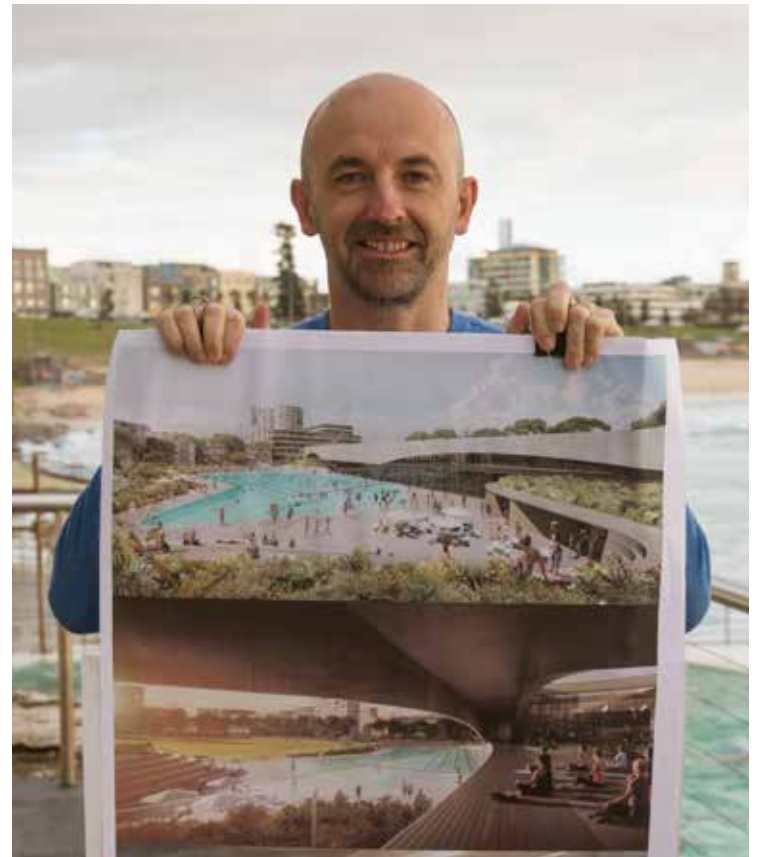
pools: “Bondi gave us the bleachers as a social space; Collaroy gave us the boardwalks; Wiley’s has a shaded deck area; South Curl Curl has a beach-like entry point. Each of them has a very individual personality but you would not be allowed to design those spaces today – engineers would be horrified.”

“BONDI GAVE US THE BLEACHERS AS A SOCIAL SPACE; COLLAROY GAVE US THE BOARDWALKS”

The aquatic and leisure centre is set within a landscaped area to be known as Gunyama Park. Its roof structure will be clad in concrete with timber spans, anchoring the space to both the urban and the natural world.

“Traditionally, aquatic centres are very artificial places, with mechanical air and water control that feel quite unpleasant to me,” Burges says. “The challenge here is to bring the pleasures of swimming in the natural environment into this space while also referencing the industrial history of this part of the city. So, for example, we are working with public artist Jonathan Jones on having some large pipes in the kids’ pool.

“We want the historical profile of the suburb to be subtly acknowledged. Green Square is built on what was once the Botany swamp with banksia scrubland, and represents a layering



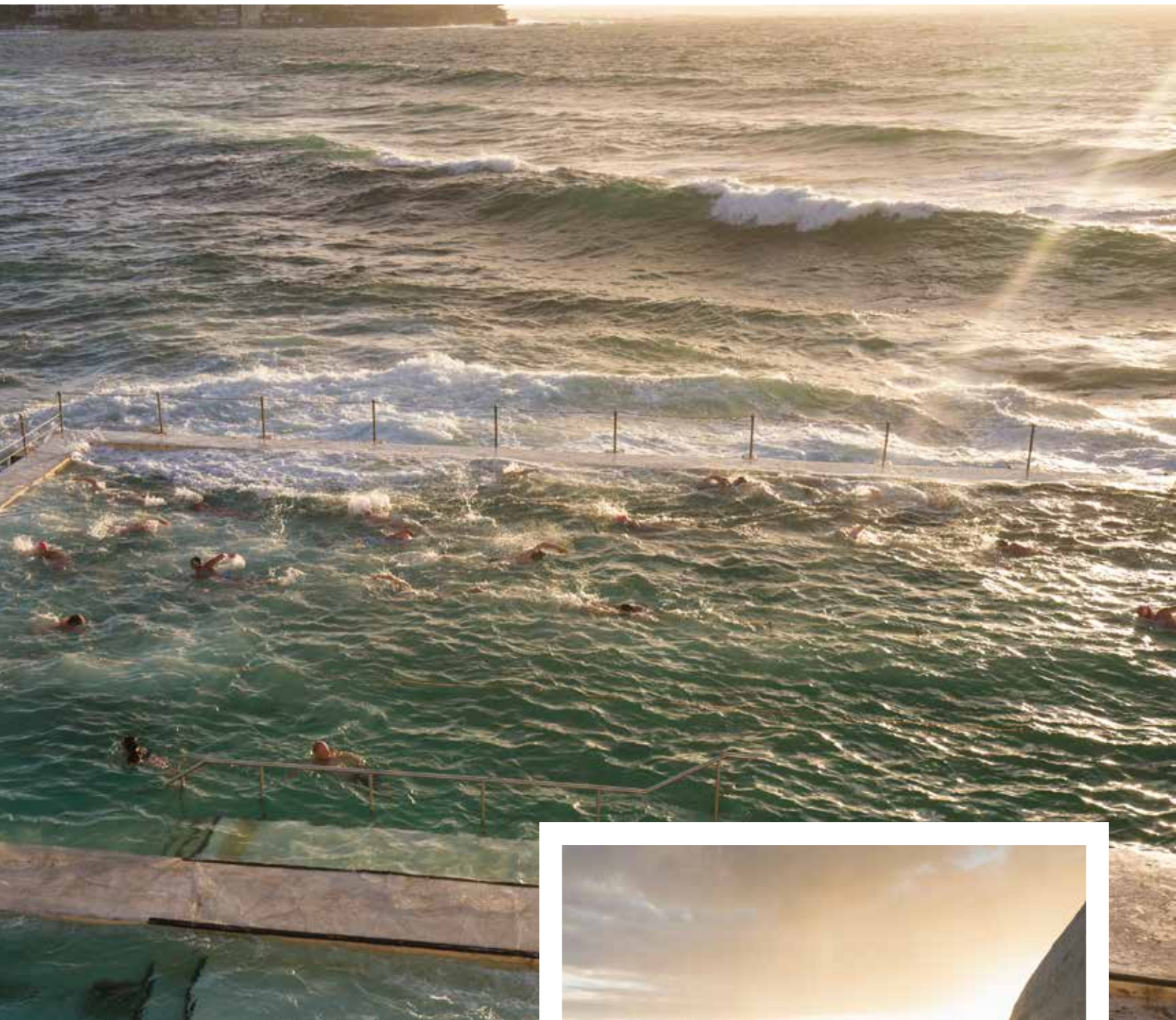
of pre-European wetlands and agricultural market gardens followed by factories now erased by supposedly civilised high-density apartment-block living.”

Through his success in competitions, the City of Sydney has become one of Burges’ main clients. “I do feel an affinity with their community-building aspirations, and appreciate that they have tried to bring forward emerging firms that could bring a fresh take on public buildings. One of our other projects for them is a big childcare centre on four levels in Darlinghurst, which was a very satisfying project to win. It took a lot of courage to approach us, because we are not childcare experts.”

But then, until recently, Burges had never designed an aquatic centre either. Sometimes you just have to take the plunge.



— IN THE MIDDLE —



Left: Artist's impressions of the winning designs by Andrew Burges. Above and right: Bondi Icebergs swimmers enjoy the summer warmth during their morning dip, but they'll be here all winter too.



□

—IN THE MIDDLE—

Fifty years after the Freedom Ride highlighted discrimination against Aboriginal people, a group of Sydney students retraced the journey and found much still needs to change.

Ride of their lives

Written by Jocelyn Prasad
Photography by Victoria Baldwin

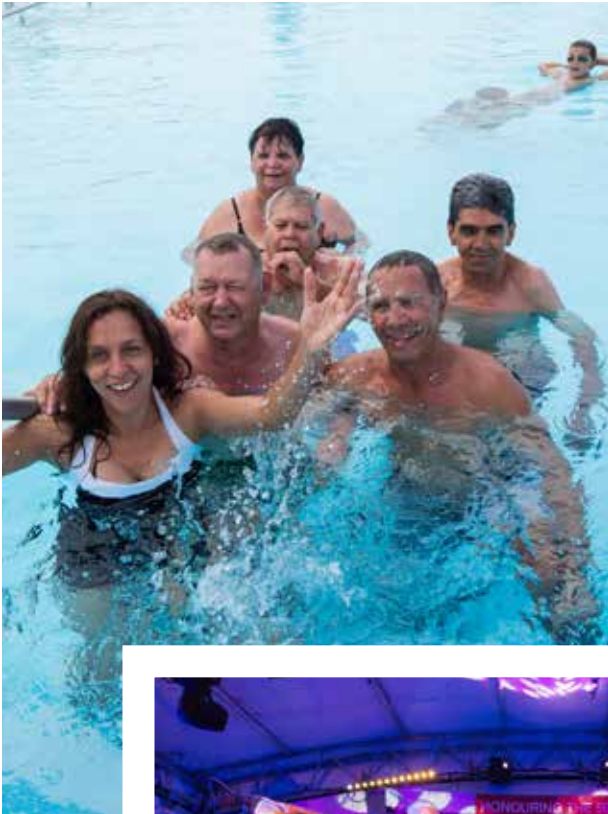
The group of University of Sydney students who embarked on a bus tour of regional NSW in the summer of 1965 had little idea how their actions would raise the profile of racism in Australia.

“I don’t think that any of us had a clear idea of what the reaction would be,” says Sydney alumnus Darce Cassidy, who was among the 29 students who went on the bus tour. Cassidy also reported on it for the ABC.

Fifty years later, this Freedom Ride is recognised as a turning point in Australia’s

race relations. Charles Perkins – a leader of the ride who later became one of Australia’s most prominent Aboriginal activists – said the event gave the 1967 referendum “real meaning and influenced the number of people who voted in a positive way”.

In February this year, another group of 29 University students took their own bus ride to retrace the original. Over five days they visited communities in Moree, Dubbo, Walgett, Bowraville and Kempsey. They were joined by University staff, original Freedom



Left to right, top to bottom. 2015 Freedom Riders enjoy a historic dip. 1965, Charles Perkins joins locals in the Moree pool (archival photo). Celebrations include traditional performances, body paint and concerts featuring Troy Cassar-Daley and Paul Kelly. The 1965 bus and freedom riders unfurl their banners (photo courtesy Ann Curthoys).

Riders, representatives from the NSW Aboriginal Land Council, filmmaker Rachel Perkins (daughter of Charles Perkins) and musicians Troy Cassar-Daley and Paul Kelly, who performed at each stop.

In contrast to the protests, scuffles and arrests from 1965, the visitors were warmly welcomed in each town. A lot has changed over 50 years but a lot more still needs to change, according to the students who went on the recent ride.

The student contingent was led by Students' Representative Council President Kyol Blakeney, a Gomeroi man and third-year student at the University.

Blakeney wanted the re-enactment to be a student-driven event embracing the spirit of the original ride. "I wanted to make it about issues that remain in Indigenous communities: gaps in health, education, life expectancy, housing and welfare," he says.

Blakeney believes the Aboriginal Affairs portfolio is treated like a political football in Australia, and that it languishes at the bottom of the policy agenda.

Max Hall, in the third year of a Bachelor of Arts in English and philosophy, says the trip was a unique mix of nostalgia and celebration, marking events of 50 years ago while recognising Australia has a way to go in righting the wrongs of past prejudices. "Many

of the injustices that were very overt a while ago are now passive, institutionalised racism," Hall says.

Hall cites the Moree baths as an example. In 1965, the baths refused entry to Aboriginal children, making it a focal point of the Freedom Ride. The original Freedom Riders attracted a crowd of 500 locals, who taunted them when Perkins tried to admit local Aboriginal kids into the pool. Verbal abuse turned physical and fights broke out between the students and local residents. Eventually the local mayor agreed to rescind the ban and the students agreed to leave town.

**“WHAT WE’VE GOT
IN COMMON [WITH
THE ORIGINALS]
IS FIRE IN OUR
BELLIES.”**

“Fifty years ago Indigenous kids were not allowed in,” Hall says. “Today the Moree pools are too expensive for many Indigenous families in poverty.” According to Hall, Aboriginal children are also unfairly disadvantaged by a

policy that bans kids as young as seven from the pool for life for minor misdemeanours.

Hall says it is incumbent on the current generation of students to examine such racism closely and to keep talking about Indigenous issues rather than buying into “the story we’d like to believe” that things are much better.

For third-year PhD student and Yuin woman Mariko Smith, the re-enactment was the chance of a lifetime to talk to Aboriginal communities in country NSW. “It’s really important to go out and see what the issues

are first hand,” says the sociology student, who has taught students about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues at the University.

The opportunity to visit these communities will inform Smith’s work as a student, researcher and teacher and shape what she can do to make a difference to Aboriginal communities. She also enjoyed the company of original Freedom Riders. “What we’ve got in common is fire in our bellies,” she says.

James Spigelman, a fellow Rider who went on to become Chief Justice of the NSW Supreme Court and is now Chairman of the ABC says: “It was the first time Indigenous issues were on the front pages for a continuous period and in a manner that drew the public’s attention to issues of discrimination and deprivation.”

Spigelman found himself in the limelight as the subject of a *Daily Mirror* story after he was “king hit” during an argument in Moree. “It scared my mother,” he says when recalling the photo of his bruised and swollen 18-year-old face under the headline “VICTIM”.

As they left Moree in 1965, students were spat on and pelted with tomatoes, eggs and stones. Freedom Rider Beth Hansen recalls this as one of the two most traumatic events of the ride (the other was when locals tried to

run the bus off the road in Walgett). “We were very much schooled in non-violent reaction,” Hansen says.

Hansen wasn’t part of the re-enactment but shares Blakeney’s view that it can create an opportunity to reassess the issues Aboriginal people face in 2015.

“I’ve met a few people who were young kids in the towns we visited in 1965 and they talked about the impact the Freedom Ride had on them – it enabled them to build confidence to speak out for their rights,” Hansen says.

“It wouldn’t be the same in 2015 for a group of white people to speak out on behalf of Aboriginal people. But in 1965 that was the context we were in.”



FREEDOM RIDE SCHOLARSHIPS

The University of Sydney is committed to ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander students and staff can reach their true potential.

The University’s INSPIRED fundraising campaign has made Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pathways to higher education one of its priorities. You can be a part of that support by giving to the NSW Freedom Ride Scholarships.

sydney.edu.au/freedomride/give

MARGARET ZHANG

Margaret is the founder of fashion blog Shine By Three. She has completed her Bachelor of Commerce requirements and is in the last year of her Bachelor of Laws. Here she shares her personal pleasures of modern life.

Follow Margaret on Twitter @Margaret_Zhang



MY FAVOURITE

01. CITY

I'm working towards moving to New York City (number one on my list at the moment) to expand my work in photography, styling, writing, and creative direction.



02. GADGET

I recently got Huawei's new Ascend P7 phone, and both the front and back cameras are a dream, not to mention the productivity on the email front, and severely fuelling my Instagram addiction. This is closely followed by my Nikon D600 camera, which I'm never without.

03. CAFÉ

Nobody does breakfast or brunch quite like Australia. Cafe Bellagio in Waverley is a regular study and work spot for me for their avocado smash and soy chai latte. Ruby's Diner, also in Waverley, does a fantastic quinoa bircher in coconut milk.





04. ONLINE RESOURCES

The Business of Fashion and *The Coveteur* are hands-down my favourite online resources for all things providing industry insight.

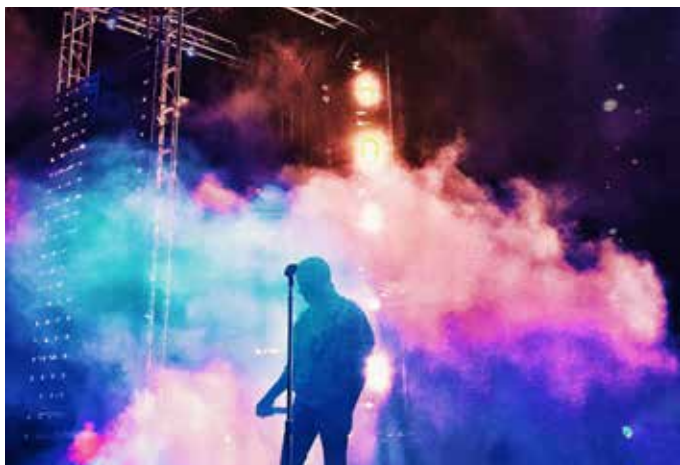
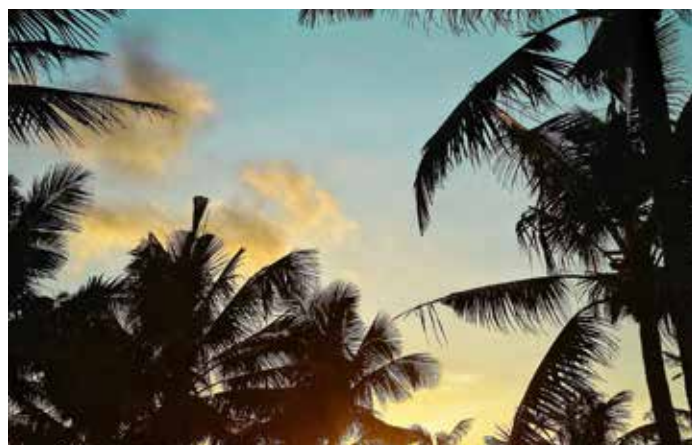


05. ARTIST

Donald Robertson is one of my favourite artists saturating social media with his tongue-in-cheek canvases and repurposing of everyday items.

06. HOLIDAYS

Paris and Thailand (mainly Phuket and Bangkok) are my favourite indulgent travel experiences in terms of visual inspiration, rest and relaxation, and truly excellent food if you look for it. Even simply being on a plane and being mesmerised by what's out the window is a feeling I get hooked on, travelling so often.

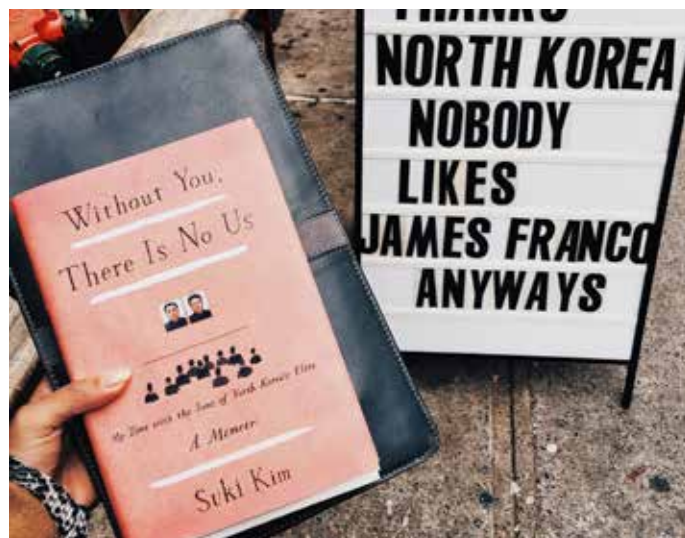


07. MUSIC

I recently saw Kid Cudi play in Los Angeles which was a bit of a throwback, and a lot of fun. Lo Fang, James Blake, and Active Child are some of my repeat artists on Spotify.

08. BOOK

Suki Kim's *Without you, there is no us* is the most powerful book I've read in the past year. Kim poses as an English teacher posing as a missionary in order to teach North Korea's elite sons, and her recount of her experiences is both emotional and endearing.



Matthew Neuhaus's career as a diplomat has taken him face-to-face with some of the world's most intimidating leaders.

Dealing with dictators

Written by Kathy Marks

Photography by James Fasuekoi and Matthew Neuhaus

It was 1997, and Matthew Neuhaus had just been appointed Australia's High Commissioner to Nigeria. His first challenge was to present his credentials to General Sani Abacha, military ruler of the African nation and one of the modern era's most ruthless dictators.

"This was a seriously scary thing to do," relates Neuhaus (BA '80, LLB '82). "Abacha had just [in November 1995] executed political activist Ken Saro-Wiwa, and Australia had been involved in suspending Nigeria from the Commonwealth.

"I went to present my credentials, and he was sitting there in dark glasses with a pistol

beside him, and you felt he might just pick it up and shoot you."

That meeting set the tone for Neuhaus's diplomatic career. After Nigeria, he ran the Commonwealth Secretariat's Political Affairs Division, locking horns with an array of despots, including Fiji's Frank Bainimarama. He was then posted to Zimbabwe, where the ageing President Robert Mugabe, he observes, is "probably now regarded as the dictator from Central Casting".

"I often say that if I ever write an autobiography, I'll call it *Dealing with dictators*," the 55-year-old chuckles.



Nigerian President Sani Abacha reviews troops in 1998. Photo: AP/AAP

The son of Australian missionaries, Neuhaus grew up in Tanzania, speaking Swahili. He was 16 when the family returned to Australia. In 1976, with just a year or so of formal schooling, he enrolled at the University of Sydney, his father's alma mater.

The University "opened the door to a wider world", recalls Neuhaus. Lecturers such as Professor Neville Meaney, who taught his history honours year, and the late Professor David Johnson, an international law expert, were particularly inspirational. He became involved in student politics, encountering, among others, Tony Abbott, who was already earning a reputation as a political bruiser.

"I WENT TO PRESENT MY CREDENTIALS, AND HE WAS SITTING THERE IN DARK GLASSES WITH A PISTOL BESIDE HIM, AND YOU FELT HE MIGHT JUST PICK IT UP AND SHOOT YOU."

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Sydney also gave him “a sense of place”. Over a coffee at the Law School café during a quick visit home, he recounts: “I always used to love walking across to the Quadrangle, where I did most of my work ... Coming out of the suburbs every day to somewhere like this ... you could see there was a goal to work towards and a place for you in the world.”

That place, he decided – guided by Meaney, an Australian foreign policy doyen, and Johnson, who had close links with the United Nations – was the diplomatic service.

And so, after graduating he found himself back in Africa: first Kenya, then Nigeria, and now Zimbabwe, as Ambassador. In between came postings to Port Moresby and the UN, as well as London.

Ask Neuhaus about the diplomat’s role and he quotes two common myths: “that you’re sent abroad to lie for your country and you’re saying nice things all the time.”

What guides him, in reality, is “what we like to call Australian values, many of which are now international values: good governance, democracy, a free society and people’s right to have a say in their lives”.

Just as important as furthering your country’s interests, he says, is

standing up for those values, and supporting those standing up for them.

When he first met Mugabe, for example, the Zimbabwean President declared that violence was an inevitable part of the electoral process. Neuhaus politely differed. “I said, ‘No, Your Excellency, I really cannot agree with that. We always manage to have peaceful elections in Australia – quite contentious sometimes, but always very peaceful – and I can’t see why that can’t happen here’.”

Perhaps he made an impression. The country’s next elections, in 2013, were peaceful. But they were not, as Mugabe

claimed, “free, fair and credible”. Neuhaus, who had witnessed blatant poll rigging, was outspoken in his criticism, calling the process “fatally flawed”.

Is there an idealistic side to the job? “You know, as a student you’re quite idealistic and looking for opportunities to make a difference. A career in diplomacy does enable you to keep some of that idealism and work for a better world,

particularly in a place like Africa.”

At university, Neuhaus says, through his classes in history, philosophy and law, and his involvement in student politics, he imbibed the values that underpin his professional life.



Ambassador Neuhaus with Pope John Paul II in Nigeria, 1998. President Abacha is in the background.

It was an era in which the ideological battles of the Cold War were playing out across Australian campuses, and he found Sydney “in foment”.

Tony Abbott was waging war on compulsory student union fees and a Students’ Representative Council (SRC) dominated by militant left-wingers. Neuhaus remembers the young Abbott, later to become a good friend, as a “natural scrapper” who “had strong beliefs and was already pretty conservative and controversial ... [with] a certain charm and charisma in rallying people around him”.

Other contemporaries included Tanya Coleman, who went on to marry future federal treasurer Peter Costello, and Lucy Hughes, who later became Sydney’s first female Lord Mayor (and married Liberal politician Malcolm Turnbull). Neuhaus – who also fondly recalls his time in the Sydney University Regiment – was eventually elected to the SRC himself.

He reveals that he always expected to enter politics after a spell as a diplomat. However, when the opportunity arose for him to make the transition, he was appointed to the Commonwealth Secretariat role and chose that career path instead.

Lately he has felt perturbed by the “increasing negative discourse” in Australian politics, which shocked a visiting delegation of Zimbabwean women politicians last year, he

says. “They said to me: ‘We thought we were bad in the Zimbabwean Parliament, the way we shout at each other and carry on, but then we saw the Australian Parliament and realised maybe we aren’t so bad.’

“That’s unfortunate, because we want them to learn to be more understanding of one

another, particularly because in Africa that can become a matter of life and death.”

With the interview over, Neuhaus is off to the Law School to discuss a joint development project. “You can keep coming back to this place – and I come back constantly,” he says. “Because what’s happened is that the University has become much more internationally oriented. That’s what has shifted over the years, and that’s great.”



Ambassador Neuhaus with Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe in 2011.

CURRENT AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADORS WHO ATTENDED SYDNEY

CAMBODIA Alison Burrows BA (Hons) '88	JAPAN Bruce Miller BA (Hons) '81 LLB '86	UNITED ARAB EMIRATES Pablo Kang BA (Hons) '95 LLB '98
HOLY SEE John McCarthy BA '68 LLB '71	NEW ZEALAND Michael Potts BA '72	ZIMBABWE Matthew Neuhaus BA '80 LLB '82
INDIA (High Commissioner) Patrick Suckling BA '94 GradDip '95	SINGAPORE (High Commissioner) Philip Green BA '83 LLB '84	

Dr Anna Lau was on the frontline in the fight against ebola when the highly infectious virus made its way to the United States in 2014.

Global game-changer

Written by Michael Visontay
Photography by Victoria Baldwin

Ebola isn't something most people want to go anywhere near, but in her role as co-director of the microbiology lab at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Maryland, Dr Anna Lau got up close with the deadly virus.

Dr Lau was directly involved in analysing tests from three patients suspected of having the horrific disease last year. However, it wasn't just the spread of the virus she was helping to battle, but also the spread of panic among staff and the broader community.

“When the first case came to NIH, the director held town hall meetings which filled both the auditoriums to overflowing,” she remembers. “He wanted to explain ... that it [was] OK. ‘We knew what we were doing. We have very well-trained staff. You are not at risk.’”

Managing panic levels among staff was a big challenge. Dr Lau had no concerns about her own safety. “The data shows that if you have adequate personal protective equipment,





you train appropriately and you handle things in a safe manner, you will be fine,” she says.

But as a senior manager, Dr Lau felt personally responsible for her team and needed to be acutely aware of the risks. “Only a few were allowed into the lab where the Ebola analysis was carried out,” she says. “We had to allay fears of the other techs, so that when they saw specialists in blue scrubs they didn’t panic.

“We needed to know that we were confident in our staff about what they were doing, and that we knew what to do as management, if something went wrong.”

Of the three cases, only one tested positive: a nurse who had been infected while treating a patient in Texas. She was the first known patient to contract the virus on American soil, attracting considerable media interest. The nurse was released from the NIH

microbiology labs with a clean bill of health in October 2014.

“When she was released from NIH, it was a huge public event. The director of the institute hugged her, to show everyone that she was safe, and the entire medical team stood behind her. Then she went to the White House and [US President] Obama hugged her.”

Only two years before the ebola crisis, Dr Lau joined the NIH through a fellowship program that led to the creation of a new database for testing and diagnosing fungal infections. Her acceptance in the program was initiated by her PhD supervisor, Professor Tania Sorrell, now head of the University’s Marie Bashir Institute for Infectious Diseases and Biosecurity.

Dr Lau admits her meteoric rise from fellowship to senior management is highly uncommon, particularly in light of the fact

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that she didn't heed the call of microbiology until her second year of medical science at the University of Sydney. "I actually wanted to do music but mum didn't want me to because it wasn't a stable career," she reflects. "I was interested in med science, but I didn't love it."

After taking classes in microbiology and infectious diseases, Dr Lau completed her honours year at Westmead Hospital where she had the chance to witness the practical application of her research.

She attributes a substantial part of her success to Professor Sorrell, who went above and beyond the call of duty as supervisor. "[Tania] was an amazing mentor and really was instrumental in nurturing my love of microbiology," Dr Lau says. She also singles

to date. It also opens a window to the world of other high-profile figures.

"Forbes held its inaugural '30 under 30 summit' in Philadelphia in October 2013," Dr Lau says. "It was an amazing experience. Monica Lewinsky gave her first public appearance and she's standing up against cyber bullying. She said she was patient zero. Overnight the whole world hated her, because the media turned against her.

"We had Sarah Blakely, the founder of Spanx women's underwear company. She started with nothing, just an idea and \$5000 in the bank. Then there was an inventor who developed a soccer ball and skipping rope to distribute to people in Africa. One hour of playing with them creates kinetic energy and

"I GREW UP IN WESTMEAD AND I WOULD LOVE TO GIVE BACK TO MY MENTORS, WHO GAVE ME SO MUCH."

out lecturer Helen Agus as a key influence on her professional journey.

Her work at the NIH has won Dr Lau inclusion in *Forbes* magazine's annual '30 under 30' list of innovators in global health. She was completely unaware of the nomination and unprepared for the visibility it has placed on her work.

The *Forbes* honour does not carry a financial prize. Its value lies more in the recognition and vindication of Dr Lau's work

when you flick a switch, you get five hours of light in your village hut."

Although Dr Lau enjoys rubbing shoulders with other innovators and high achievers, she says she definitely wants to come back to Australia some day. "I grew up in Westmead [in western Sydney] and I would love to give back to my mentors, who gave me so much." With the world at her feet and countless opportunities around the globe, it could be some time before that day arrives.

THE BOOKS THAT CHANGED MY MIND

Our academics reflect on the reading experiences that led them to see life differently.



Joellen Riley has been Dean of the University of Sydney Law School since 2013.



JOELLEN RILEY

Dean, the University of Sydney Law School

THE SWEETEST DREAM

Doris Lessing, 2001

Finding a single book that “changed my mind” is quite a challenge. Now, Forty years after I first enrolled in arts at this university, and after several more degrees and a couple of different careers, I know that most books change your mind in some way, some more profoundly than others.

One particularly thought-provoking novel that floats to mind is Doris Lessing’s *The sweetest dream*. I picked it up in paperback from Frankfurt airport when I was facing the long flight home from a labour law conference in 2005. Labour law conferences in Europe tend to have a distinctly socialist flavour (which has always suited me fine).

The mind-changing theme of the novel was that the purest ideologies – the sweetest of dreams – are corruptible in the hands of inevitably flawed human beings.

The story, told through the eyes of a kind and forbearing woman once married to ‘Comrade Johnny’, rambles through the interconnected lives of the various

political activists and idealists who enjoy the hospitality of her open house. As their lives unfold, we witness the hypocrisy in their self-righteous, bright-edged idealism, particularly in the case of the young left-wing African student who returns to his country to become part of a despotic regime.

The sweetest dream convinced me (or maybe just reminded me) that a tolerant kindness to others, whatever their political or religious beliefs, is a better philosophy than any political ideology on the planet.

If pursuing an ideal for the sake of the ideal itself leads to cruelty and nastiness, then there is something wrong with the ideal. I still have a tendency to see the world through the eyes of a left-leaning labour lawyer, but I hope I am now more careful not to be dogmatic about anything.

GREG WHITWELL

Dean, the University of Sydney Business School

FOOLED BY RANDOMNESS: THE HIDDEN ROLE OF CHANCE IN LIFE AND IN THE MARKETS

Nassim Nicholas Taleb, 2004

Nassim Nicholas Taleb's book really needs to be read in conjunction with two others by him: *The Black Swan: The impact of the highly improbable* (2007) and *Antifragile: Things that gain from disorder* (2012). I emerged from his books thinking differently about the role of luck not only in business but also in my own life.

In talking about the "survival of the least fit", he warns of the foolishness of those who imbibe the recommendations of the lucky fool whose success was based simply on being in the right place at the right time.

Taleb reminds us that we tend to underestimate the way chance influences our lives and exaggerate the apparent skills of those deemed to be successful.

In *The Black Swan*, he complains that "we are demonstrably arrogant about what we think we know" and that we pay insufficient attention to what we dismiss as "outliers". And yet it is the outliers, the very things that we did not predict and could barely imagine, that have the greatest (cumulative) impact on our lives.

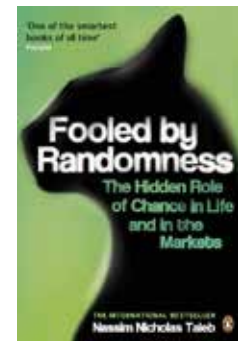
Taleb wants us to embrace uncertainty and randomness. We need to be the opposite of fragile, and in *Antifragile* he coins the awkward term "antifragility" to

refer to individuals and institutions that benefit from, indeed flourish because of, volatility and stressors.

He criticises the proliferation of policies misguidedly designed to make things less fragile. We need to create institutions that gain from the unexpected and from disorder.

Taleb writes caustically, and with great wit and erudition. He is something of a black swan himself. He certainly has changed the way I think.

Greg Whitwell has been Dean of the University of Sydney Business School since June 2014.



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DONNA WATERS

Dean, the University of Sydney Nursing School

IN HIS IMAGE: THE CLONING OF A MAN

David Rorvik, 1978

I think I was in my final year of nursing training when I read the book that changed my mind, or more accurately, the book that opened my mind to what might be possible.

David Rorvik wrote *In His Image* – the story of an eccentric American millionaire who wanted to clone himself. I read the book some years after it had been published – blissfully unaware of the controversy it had generated. In retrospect, there were many things about the book that I had failed to notice.

I had no idea the author was a respected science and medical reporter, nor indeed appreciated that the book was published by Lippincott (a well-known publisher of medical journals and texts).

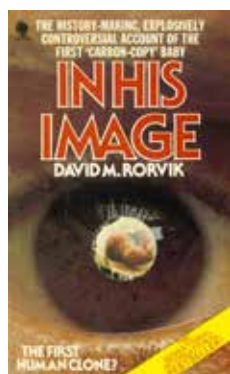
With biology and genetics very clear in my mind from my nursing training, the powerful combination of science and money described in the book seemed an entirely plausible recipe for successful human cloning. The intrigue extended to the author using pseudonyms throughout, seemingly to protect the identities of the real participants.

The story is built around the description of a research project in which “Max” uses his considerable wealth to support a large research team in a secret location to create a viable human egg with his DNA. This egg is implanted in a surrogate, eventually leading to the successful birth of Max’s clone.

I can remember finishing the book and thinking “well that could definitely have happened”. I later found out that a New York newspaper had got hold of the book before its release (in 1978) and had heralded the birth of the first human clone on its front page.

There were plenty of reasons to think the story might be true but it all ended rather badly for Rorvik and Lippincott, who were sued for defamation by one of the scientists whose work was referred to in the book.

Reading *In His Image* really did change my mind about humans, about possibilities and about the future. I certainly didn’t know at the time that a real mammal would eventually be cloned, that I would be connected to a world of knowledge through something called the Internet, or that I would spend the next 30 years of my life working in research and health.



Donna Waters was appointed Dean of the University of Sydney Nursing School in January 2015.



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ARCHIE JOHNSTON

Dean, Faculty of Engineering and Information Technologies

WHAT I TALK ABOUT WHEN I TALK ABOUT RUNNING

Haruki Murakami, 2007

This book by Japanese author Haruki Murakami is a memoir my teenage son gave to me because I'm a retired marathon "tragic" (Boston 1994). I read it on a recent family holiday in Hawaii as diversion therapy from the mandatory and multiple shopping trips and beach visits with my five daughters.

I was charmed by Murakami's life. His narrative meandered from his time managing a jazz bar to his success as one of Japan's leading novelists, and on his journey he became addicted to running.

As a former runner, I appreciate many of the benefits of long-distance running but had never connected the creativity of novel writing with the monotony of this physical endeavour.

In his tale Murakami blends fiction with non-fiction – perchance half-memoir, half-Zen meditation. It is fascinating to discover that while he was developing

into an outstanding novelist, his race performances, despite his commitment to his training, were not outstanding but average at best.

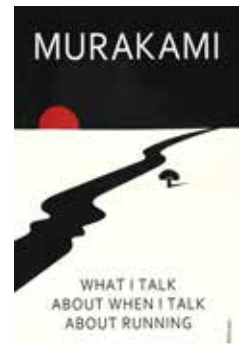
Yet it seems that the physical and mental discipline Murakami gained from doing marathons and triathlons stimulated his creative excellence.

Reflecting on growing old as his body is wearing out, he exudes supreme commitment to training and demonstrates the defiance that may explain his longevity as an accomplished author.

Sometimes he reflects melancholically on his body growing old but at other times he seems intent on ramping up as others his age are winding down – all of which adds to the trail of contradictions and makes this book a fascinating read.



Archie Johnston has been Dean of the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technologies since 2009.





Meet the 86-year-old alumnus whose drive helped develop a smartphone app to predict when people are at risk of a fall.

May the BELForce be with you

Written by Katie Szittner
Photography by Victoria Baldwin

Sometimes the greatest discoveries are born from the most unlikely partnerships. Barry de Ferranti has teamed up with a group of undergraduate students to develop a smartphone app that could reduce the incidence of injury and death in the elderly.

For de Ferranti (BSc '49, BE(Hons) '51), forming a band of retired professionals to solve the problems of ageing was a natural progression after a successful career in engineering, information technology and business.

In 2013, inspired by a talk on the multidisciplinary approach of the University's Charles Perkins Centre by its academic director Professor Stephen Simpson,

de Ferranti founded BELForce – a hybrid acronym for Force of Benevolent Elders and Leaders.

“There’s something that is not widely known in the community, that you’re not aware of as a young person or as a hardworking family man, but it’s very strongly evident when you get to retirement,” de Ferranti says. “It’s the concept of ‘what do I do now?’”

“Alumni have got a lot to offer to the community, but often they don’t really know how best to do that and, what’s more, the community doesn’t know what they’ve got to offer.

“It’s not hard to find alumni with wonderful skills and track records. If you bring them

together you'll find common ground, and part of that common ground is what we can do to help."

After meeting with Professor Simpson, de Ferranti approached the head of the Charles Perkins Centre's translational gerontology node, Professor David Le Couteur, to find out the greatest challenges facing people in later life.

The answer, de Ferranti found, could be distilled into five categories – boredom, loneliness, accidents, helplessness and hopelessness – aptly distilled into the acronym BLAHH. Of these, accidents, particularly falls, present the greatest risk of rapid decline and death.

"Falls are a major cause of disability and death in older people, especially from hip fractures," Professor

Le Couteur says. "And the rate of falls is increasing."

Working with academic staff in the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technologies, de Ferranti and his colleagues in BELForce took a lateral thinking approach to the issue. What if, instead of reporting when a fall had occurred, you could anticipate when a fall was about to happen?

"We discussed how we can test the normal gait of people as they walk and the movement of their centres of gravity," de Ferranti says.

"If it suddenly departs from a regular and well-established pattern, then that would be an indication that they might be about to fall."

Academics suggested taking the concept to undergraduate students completing a major software development project in the

final year of their degree. BELForce pitched an idea for a mobile phone app to the students, and within 12 weeks the students had developed a prototype.

The students investigated software packages and mathematical techniques to come up with a range of innovative solutions and insights that might be useful in predicting a

fall; for example, drawing on techniques used in finance to show departures from normal patterns.

The resulting app, *Steady*, is fully functional, but needs financial support for commercialisation.

The app is designed for older people who may not be familiar with smartphone technology. Users enter information about

**“WE CAN PRODUCE
SO MUCH MORE
BY SYNERGY
THAN WE COULD
INDIVIDUALLY.
IT IS VITALLY
IMPORTANT
TO BE ABLE TO
COMMUNICATE
WELL WITH AN
OPEN MIND.”**

themselves and who to call in the event of a fall, then take a 20-second walk to give *Steady* a sample of their gait.

The app operates in background mode; if the user's gait shows a marked departure from normal, the phone buzzes, sounds two stages of alarm and warns the user of a possible fall. If the user falls, *Steady* sends details of the fall and the GPS location to the contacts identified by the user.

De Ferranti says the app provides a test case for what is possible from collaborations between alumni, staff and students. It's just one of many projects BELForce is investigating.

"It's a bit like going into a foyer and there are a dozen doors," de Ferranti says. "We opened one and it showed a very interesting area, we opened another and that showed a very interesting complementary area, and so it's going on. I think the concept of BELForce is one that you could extend into a lot of fields."

Among those fields, neuroplasticity has captured the imagination of de Ferranti and his colleagues.

"Brain retraining and neuroplasticity are raising hopes for improved cognitive function in older people, which could also impact the rates of falls and accidents," Professor Le Couteur says.

The test case provided by *Steady*, de Ferranti says, is evidence of the power of intergenerational collaboration, and reinforces the multidisciplinary model espoused by the Charles Perkins Centre, which brings together academics from all 16

of the University's faculties to find big-picture solutions to obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and related conditions.

"I think we've proved the success in BELForce of combined lateral thinking based on our engineering backgrounds, mathematical backgrounds, physics backgrounds and so on," de Ferranti says. "We can produce so much more by synergy than we could individually. It is vitally important to be able to communicate well with an open mind."

De Ferranti has also found the experience of returning to academia from business refreshing. "It's been very different to commerce," he says. "The objectives of people in commerce are to make money and not to make mistakes. The objectives in academia are to get some publications up and get other people talking about the research.

"Mind you, mentally I suppose most of us among the group have never really left the campus, we're still part of it. When I first appeared on campus in 1946 it was very different physically, but the exciting, innovative atmosphere is the same."

BELForce is now considering how developments across diverse disciplines (for example, wearable, assistive smart technology) can encourage seniors to regain purpose, energy and productivity: PEP rather than BLAHH.

To find out more and get involved with BELForce, contact Barry de Ferranti: barry.ferranti@gmail.com

Andrew McLachlan is world renowned for his research into common misconceptions about modern medicines.

Medical mythbuster

Written by Chris Rodley
Illustration by Monica Higgins

If it weren't for Professor Andrew McLachlan, most of us scientists would still think paracetamol is an effective source of relief for acute lower-back pain. In a landmark study published in medical journal *The Lancet* last year, Professor McLachlan and colleagues at the George Institute for Global Health found that it doesn't have a substantial impact on reducing pain or recovery time in people with recent onset lower-back pain.

This finding is just one of the conventional wisdoms Professor McLachlan has helped

debunk during his career, part of a body of work that has earned the researcher from the Faculty of Pharmacy a global reputation.

Take the common belief that antibiotics and alcohol don't mix. While it is true that a few classes of antibiotics should never be combined with alcohol, Professor McLachlan says that in most cases there is no interaction between the two drugs (though he adds that excessive alcohol consumption when you are already unwell can cause health problems in its own right).

Other misconceptions are less innocuous. Professor McLachlan notes the pervasive belief that complementary and alternative remedies are safe to combine with conventional medicine because they are made from “natural” ingredients. In fact, some of these remedies can result in dangerous interactions. Herbal antidepressant St John’s Wort, for example, can increase the rate at which the anticoagulant drug warfarin is metabolised, thus reducing the amount in a person’s body and putting them at risk of stroke.

In many cases, Professor McLachlan says, we simply don’t know the consequences of combining alternative and conventional medicines. So one of his research projects aims to discover whether the widespread practice of taking Chinese herbs during chemotherapy can lead to potentially serious interactions during cancer treatment.

Other medicine myths are more harmful to our wallets than our health, such as the belief that brand-name medicines are more effective than their less expensive, generic equivalents. “People often tell me that a particular brand of medicine works for them, but sometimes the only thing that’s different

is the label on the box,” says Professor McLachlan, who is based at Concord Hospital. He points to the cholesterol-lowering drug simvastatin, which is sold by one manufacturer in both a branded and generic variety – yet the tablets are identical.

Why do such misconceptions arise? One reason, Professor McLachlan says, is that consumers typically seek out information from friends and relatives rather than doctors and pharmacists.

Pharmaceutical companies can also fuel misconceptions. He gives the example of over-the-counter analgesics that are advertised as targeting pain in specific parts of the body, which is pharmacologically impossible.

As well as clearing up public misconceptions, Professor McLachlan also challenges some of the medical community’s own cherished beliefs about medicines that sometimes lack a firm evidence base. He is running a follow-up study to the one about paracetamol and lower-back pain published in *The Lancet* last year, in collaboration with the George Institute for Global Health, to find out whether opioid analgesic medicines are a better alternative.



**“SOMETIMES
THE ONLY
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THE BOX.”**

SIX MEDICINE MYTHS BUSTED

MYTH: BRAND-NAME MEDICINES ARE BETTER THAN GENERICS

Reality: Generic medicines contain the same active ingredients as their branded equivalents and must meet the same standards for quality and safety.



MYTH: IF YOU'RE TAKING STATINS, YOU CAN EAT WHATEVER YOU LIKE

Reality: Statins can't make up for an unhealthy lifestyle. To help prevent heart disease and stroke, they must be taken regularly in combination with improvements to diet and exercise. "When lifestyle changes are implemented, the maximum benefit of statins in reducing heart disease can be realised," says Professor McLachlan.

MYTH: PAIN RELIEVERS CAN TARGET SPECIFIC BODY PARTS

Reality: Despite the marketing claims, over-the-counter analgesics such as ibuprofen and paracetamol cannot target the back, neck or other specific parts of the body. "These medicines go to all parts of the body," says Professor McLachlan. "Understanding this can prevent people from double dosing."

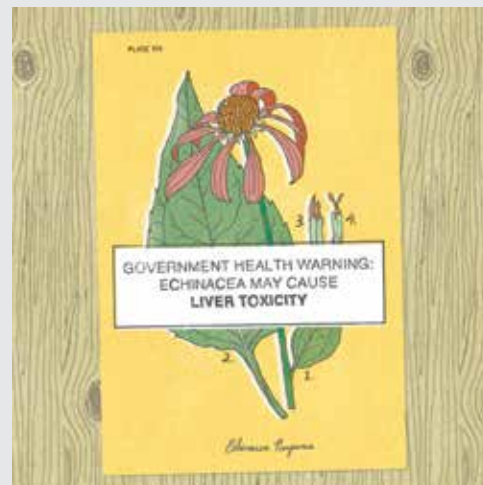


BELIEF: NEVER DRINK ALCOHOL WHILE YOU'RE ON ANTIBIOTICS

Reality: While a few types of antibiotics should not be combined with alcohol, most do not result in a dangerous interaction. However, alcohol will have a greater effect when you're sick and can be harmful in itself.

MYTH: IT'S NATURAL, SO IT'S SAFE

Reality: So-called natural remedies, such as herbal supplements, can have harmful side-effects and may interact badly with conventional medicines. Discuss using them with your doctor or pharmacist first.



MYTH: YOU CAN STOP TAKING YOUR MEDICINE WHEN YOU FEEL BETTER

Reality: Many medicines – especially those aimed at preventing disease and health problems – are designed to be taken even if you don't feel sick. A number of drugs, including those for sleeping and mental-health problems, should never be stopped abruptly.

The most serious gap in our understanding of medicines, according to Professor McLachlan, is how they work in older people, who often have multiple conditions requiring multiple medications.

To tackle this issue, he is spearheading a major multidisciplinary initiative: a National Health and Medical Research Council Centre of Research Excellence in Medicines and Ageing grant, which received \$2.5 million in funding over five years to build a detailed understanding of the benefits and harms of medicines to older people.

As well as more public education and research, Professor McLachlan says two other strategies are needed to reduce the potential for medicine misuse. One is for pharmacists to work collaboratively with other health professionals including GPs to identify and avert potential problems, such as overprescribing medicines to older patients.

Professor McLachlan discovered the importance of collaboration through a deeply personal experience. When his grandfather developed a number of health problems, he worked closely with his GP to identify the best course of treatment. “It taught me that the whole can be more than sum of the parts.”

The other way to make medicines safer, he says, is for pharmacists to provide advice and information tailored to the individual needs of each patient – a practice known as “people-centred care”. Professor McLachlan cites the example of the pharmacist who inspired him to enter the profession: University of Sydney alumnus John Chalker, whose community pharmacy he would visit as a young boy to pick up his family’s prescriptions. “John had the ability to connect with people and communicate effectively, in a really warm manner,” he says. “He didn’t just supply medicines.”

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1960s

HAMID AHMAD (MAgr '68) has received a 2014 AEI Endeavour Australian Alumni Excellence Award. Ahmad, who lives in Lahore, Pakistan,

specialised in the post-production livestock sector in his master's degree. The Australian Alumni Excellence Awards recognise and honour alumni who have attained exemplary achievements in their field of specialisation at a national, regional or international level. Ahmad said of his award: "My Australian education at Sydney University (and other experience in Australia) placed me on an international recognition list of expertise in the field. My love for Australia and Australians is always fresh in my mind due to my first two years of experience of living as a student at the University Farms, Camden, a small rural town where I got so much love and care."

PETER SHERIDAN (BDS '68 MDS '92) has been a practising dentist for more than 40 years, a lecturer at the University and an authority on clinical photography. He also has one of the world's finest collections of radios, and is a world-renowned writer on the subject. Last year saw the publication of Sheridan's book *Deco Radio: The most beautiful radios ever made*. It reveals the stories behind this period of design, and the influence of art deco and industrial design on the evolution of radios in the 1930s and 40s. Sheridan has also made a lifelong contribution to the field of multiple sclerosis, which was recognised in 2001 with an Order of Australia (AM).

1970s

ALAN ATKINSON (BA '70 MA '72) has won the Victorian Prize for Literature for the third volume of his history *The Europeans in Australia*.

Atkinson, who is a senior tutor at St Paul's College, was presented with the most valuable single literary prize in the country, \$100,000, in a ceremony in January. At the ceremony Atkinson said he was very relieved to have finished the final instalment, which covers the period from the 1870s to the aftermath of World War I. Atkinson started work on the project more than 20 years ago, never thought it would take so long, and admitted he was glad he had finished it.



1990s

KELLINDE WRIGHTSON (BA Hons '91, PhD '95) has completed the third in a series of novels, *The Baby Farmer Trilogy*. The latest book, *The Notorious Frances Thwaites* (Brandl & Schlesinger), tells the story of a rebellious 19th century English girl who runs away with a soldier and is sent to Australia by her father as punishment. Kellinde has been a research fellow and lecturer in English literature, a lawyer,



reviewer and writer. She was an Australian Bicentennial Fellow and an Australian Federation of University Women Scholar. Kellinde will be a guest of the Sydney Writers Festival in May.



Peter Sheridan and his collection of radios.

2000s

PETE IRELAND (BEc '04) was recently announced as the winner of the Independent Category for his film *Chip* as part of the Australian Film Institute/ Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts (AFI/ACTA) Social Shorts film competition. Ireland, who is based in Sydney, has had films selected for the Byron Bay International Film Festival, Shanghai International Film Festival and many other film festivals in Australia and overseas.



2010s

RACHAEL FIELD (PhD Law '12), an Associate Professor in Law at Queensland University of Technology, has received an award for Teaching Excellence in the Australian Awards for University Teaching. Field is internationally recognised for her work in identifying strategies to promote law students' psychological health and wellbeing. She received the award for her innovative use of a conversational approach that mirrors real-world legal practice, particularly in the teaching of dispute resolution.

JASPER LUDEWIG (BDesArch Hons '13) has been awarded the prestigious 2014 Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Dissertation Medal. The RIBA President's Medals, which date back to 1836, are among the world's oldest and most prestigious architecture student awards. Ludewig received the medal for his dissertation, *Made Ground: A spatial history of Sydney Park*, which earlier earned him first-class honours and the University Medal. Ludewig passed by Sydney Park on the way to the University of Sydney every day for four years, giving rise to his interest in the park as an "everyday" place. His initial reaction to winning was disbelief. "I thought there must have been a mix-up with names," he says.



IN THE NEWS

Former University of Sydney academic **Yanis Varoufakis** has become Finance Minister in Greece's new government. Varoufakis, who was born and raised in Greece, came to Sydney as a lecturer in 1988. He taught economics for 12 years before returning to Greece and taking a position at the University of Athens in the early 2000s.



YOUR TOP TEACHERS

The publication of our feature on your favourite teachers (*Why is it so? SAM*, November 2014) has prompted some alumni to submit new nominations. We have added these to the SAM website.

New nominations include: John Hickie (Anatomy), George Dury (Geography), Bob Howard (Government), Julius Stone (Law), Jim Williams and Roger Eyland (Mathematics), and the passing of Peter Wenderoth (Psychology).

For full details of the nominations, please visit the SAM website: sydney.edu.au/alumni/sam



A lasting impact

Heritage consultant and conservation architect Graham Brooks has helped preserve some of Sydney's architectural icons.

His bequest to the Faculty of Architecture, Design and Planning will ensure he contributes to the city's heritage far into the future.

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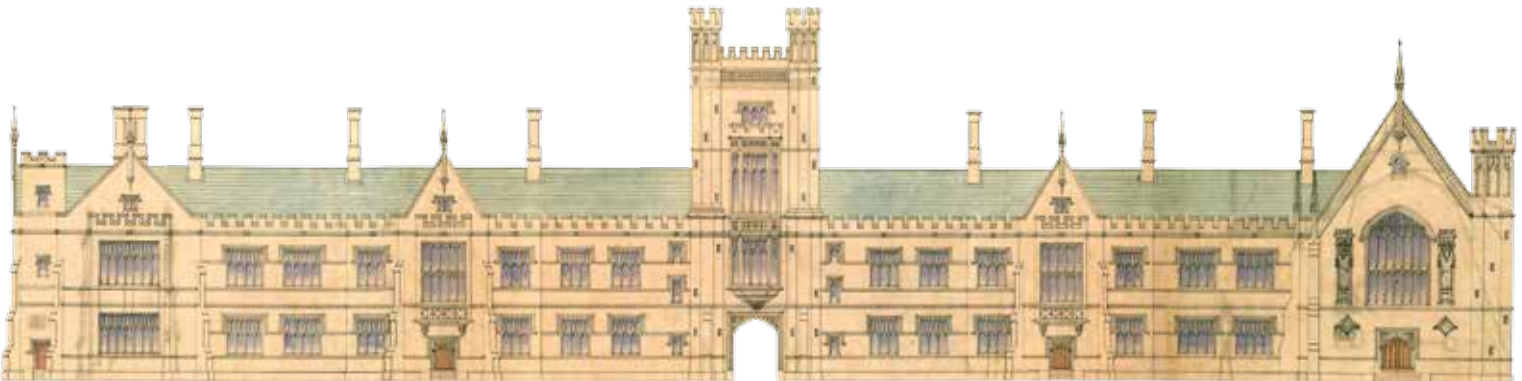


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“The beauty of the University’s architecture inspires awe and a dedication to learning,” says architect Philip Cox.

GOTHIC SPLENDOUR



As a student about to enter the Faculty of Architecture in 1957 there was no greater allure than the sandstone Gothic of the University of Sydney.

I was fascinated by the semi-ecclesiastical nature of the Gothic, the pointed arch, the cloisters, the towers – all reminiscent of older universities imagined at Oxford and Cambridge. The Gothic style had a medievalism that implied mystery, discovery and, most importantly, a seat of learning and scholarship.

The sandstone Gothic architecture of celebrated architect Edmund Blacket (1817-83) is a fine interpretation of Gothic revival during the period of architectural debate. It was a battle of styles where one took sides: romanticism versus classicism.

Blacket opted for romance and the Gothic, a sensibility that also pleased architect Professor Leslie Wilkinson (1882-1973), whose work at a later period at the University was inspired by classical architecture.

To think of the University of Sydney is still to think in terms of the splendours of the Gothic. There is the Quadrangle, with its varied massing of buildings and the delight of its semi-ruin appearance of an incomplete cloister. There is the Great Hall, a lovely, smaller-scale version of London’s Westminster Hall, with its fine proportions and the simple articulation of the windows

filled with stained glass reinforcing an awe and reverence of space, along with a dedication to learning.

When I was a student, the sandstone Gothic buildings were being restored by a team of Italian stonemasons and sculptors. They worked specifically to restore the sculptures and statues. I was amazed by how they would seize a plain block of stone and copy the grotesque gargoyles just by looking at the original and chipping away to create anew.

In the pub after they had finished work, we students often discussed the complexities of setting out Ionic scrolls and associated geometries. They responded how easy it was and how stupid architects were setting out scrolls in such a manner. They could do the same by wrapping a piece of string around a conch shell, creating a perfect scroll on the stone face. We were told that was how the Greeks did it.

Architect Philip Cox (BArch '62, DipTCPlan '71) has designed many landmark buildings, including the National Maritime Museum at Sydney’s Darling Harbour, Sydney Football Stadium and Flinders Park in Melbourne.

Image courtesy of the University of Sydney Archives G74/2



“It is a special feeling to know that through my gift, I can help change the course of someone’s life for the better.”

Through a \$3.6 million gift to the University of Sydney, alumnus Peter Davidson (BEd '54) supports students through scholarships at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music and the Sydney Medical School as well as medical research and children’s health programs.

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