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WAKE THE KIDS PROJECT

ENTHUSIASTIC MEDIA RESPONSE TO WAKE THE KIDS PROJECT

VU researchers Professor Dorothy Bruck and Professor Ian Thomas have been delighted with the media interest in their national online research project, entitled Wake the Kids. A highlight was the project featuring in a comedy skit on Channel 10’s Good News Week. More serious coverage was the norm, however, with Professor Bruck doing 42 radio interviews and write-ups appearing in 18 daily and weekly newspapers across the country, including a Chinese language newspaper. Well known media presenters like Jon Faine, Red Symons, Derryn Hinch, and ‘David and Kim’ (from Channel 10’s Nine AM TV show) conducted interviews and talk-back segments promoting the value of the research.

The Wake the Kids project is researching if smoke alarms are effective in waking up children aged 5 to 15 years, and asked parents around Australia to set off their smoke alarm one night while their child was asleep. The timing of the main burst of publicity, coordinated by VU research journalist Craig Scutt and the media team, coincided with the end of daylight saving and the “change your clock, change your battery” campaign. A VU website was developed for the research and parents recorded their results online. Over 250 schools volunteered to publicise the project, mainly through distributing postcards (see picture) or school newsletter advertisements, and the Metropolitan Fire Brigade used their resources to promote the study.

The website has received over 1500 hits and is still receiving data from parents (until the end of April). Preliminary results suggest that a disturbing 76% of the children slept through their smoke alarm with those aged between 5 and 10 years were especially at risk. About half of the younger children who did wake up could not identify the noise of the smoke alarm. Moreover, the responses of most of the children (even the teenagers) who woke up indicated considerable uncertainty about whether they should evacuate from their house if they heard the alarm.

The team at Victoria University has received international recognition for its pioneering research about the effectiveness of smoke alarms in waking groups of ‘vulnerable’ sleepers, such as children, older adults, the hard of hearing, and those who have consumed alcohol.

“Wake the Kids will help us to understand how likely children are to wake to their home smoke alarm under naturalistic conditions and tell us whether this varies with the age of the child and where the alarm is positioned,” says Professor Bruck. “This research will also help fire safety programs to make informed recommendations about alarm placement and effective fire safety plans for families.”

VU POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS FOR 2008

The Office for Research is delighted to announce the following successful Postdoctoral Research Fellows:

- Dr Marlene Cran will report to Prof Stephen Bigger, FOHES and Prof Stephen Gray, ISI.
- Dr Osaana Donkor will report to Dr Todor Vasiljevic, School of Molecular Sciences, FOHES.
- Dr Nicoletta Dragomir will report to Prof Gabriela Stephenson, School of Biomedical and Health Sciences, FOHES.
- Dr Jing He will report to Prof Yanchun Zhang, School of Computer Science and Mathematics, FOHES.
- Dr Tze Huei (Daniel) Lai will report to A/Prof Rezaul Begg, CARES and HMRP, FOAEHD.
- Dr Beata Leuner will report to A/Prof Santina Bertone, FOBL and A/Prof Danny Ben-Moshe, ICEPA.
• Dr Judith Mair will report to Prof Leo Jago, Centre for Tourism and Services Research, FOBL.
• Dr Finex Nthodovu will report to Prof Helen Borfand, Associate Dean International, FOAEDH.
• Dr Ben O’Mara will report to Prof Helen Borfand, Associate Dean International, FOAEDH and Prof Hurniyet Babacan, ICEPA.
• Dr David Roufet will report to Prof Rezaul Begg and Dr Kevin Ball, CARES and HMROP, FOAEDH.
• Mr Huu Dung Tran will report to Prof Chris Perera and Dr Anne Ng, ACME, FOHES.
• Mr Andrew Van Hulten will report to Prof Peter Sheehan, Centre for Strategic Economic Studies, FOBL.
• Dr Yong Wu will report to Prof Peng Shi, ILSCM.

MEDIA RELEASE:
NEW SMART WATER PROJECTS FOR VICTORIA UNIVERSITY

Victoria University has been awarded $475,000 for two innovative water saving projects from the Brumby Government’s Smart Water Fund.

Water Minister Tim Holding today said the grant was part of $5 million awarded to 26 water saving and water recycling projects across Melbourne and regional Victoria.

"With 11 years of drought, climate change and population growth we need to use water more efficiently," Mr Holding said.

"Finding new and innovative ways to conserve and recycle water is essential in securing Victoria’s water future."

Researchers Victoria University’s Footscray campus will receive $310,000 for a project to design and trial a new waste heat rejection system designed to replace cooling towers in power stations and large-scale air conditioning systems. The total project cost is $725,000.

A second project at the University will use a $165,000 grant to conduct a feasibility study into the potential for decentralised water treatment to sustain recreational facilities. The $350,000 project will make a significant contribution to Victoria’s collective water knowledge.

The Smart Water Fund provides seed funding for water conservation, water recycling, research and development projects and bio-solids management projects.

Grants were awarded to businesses, sporting clubs, research centres and other organisations throughout metropolitan and regional Victoria through Round 5 of the Smart Water Fund.

Projects supported under the Fund, with grants of between $10,000 and $400,000, will help cut water consumption across the State and increase recycling.

Since 2002, the Smart Water Fund has provided over $25 million in grants to over 150 projects.

Mr Holding said the findings from the project would be shared by the wider community.

“Households and industry in Footscray are making considerable efforts to reduce water use and use water more wisely,” he said.

“Victoria University should be congratulated for its efforts to develop innovative ways to reduce demand for our drinking water supplies.”

The Brumby Government’s Smart Water Fund is an initiative of Melbourne’s water businesses - City West Water, South East Water, Yarra Valley Water, Melbourne Water - and the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

To view details on successful projects or to get more information on the Smart Water Fund please visit www.smartwater.com.au or call 1800 382 432.

CENTRE FOR TOURISM AND SERVICES RESEARCH (CTSR) - A NEW FOCUS AND NEW NAME TO MATCH

The Centre for Hospitality and Tourism Research (CHTR) recently changed its name to the Centre for Tourism and Services Research (CTSR). The Centre, which has operated at Victoria University for 14 years, originally started as a school based entity within the School of Hospitality, Tourism and Marketing. In 2003 it was designated a University centre and since that time has grown to become one of Australia’s leading tourism and events research centres. The name change and restructure of the centre was based on the need to expand its research activities to include Small Enterprise Management, Electronic Commerce, Marketing and an International Tourism division while continuing to build its reputation in the areas of Events, Food and Wine, Destination Management and Regional and Community Development.

Staff changes in the past several months have added to the Centre’s capacity. These changes include the appointment of Professor Leo Jago as Director and the well earned promotion of Dr Sue Bergin Seers to Senior Research Fellow. In addition, Dr Judith Mair has been awarded one of the university’s Postdoctoral Research Fellowships and Ms Sharon Atwell employed as Administration Officer. Professor Margaret Deery continues to play a crucial role for the Centre leading research projects as well as mentoring researchers and postgraduate students. In order to build the Centre’s expertise in the important area of climate change and to drive the development of a stronger international presence for the Centre, Professor Terry De Lacy was employed on a 60% basis from August. Terry was previously the CEO of the STCRC and prior to that the Dean of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Queensland.

The Vision for the CTSR is to be recognised as Australia’s leading tourism research centre within two years and to have a strong international reputation in producing high quality applied tourism research outcomes. Within two years, the Centre for Tourism and Services Research (CTSR) will also be recognised as one of Australia’s leading research organisations in services.

ANIMAL ETHICS AT VU

The primary role of VU’s Animal Experimentation Ethics Committee (AEEC) is to review all research proposals related to the use of animals for research and teaching within the University.

The operation of the AEEC is governed by the NHMRC’s Code of Practice for the Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes. The Code requires the AEEC to determine whether the case for animal use is justified and to ensure adherence to the principles of Replacement, Reduction and Refinement (the 3Rs).

The University is licensed by the Victorian Bureau of Animal Welfare (BAW) to conduct research and teaching with animals at three campuses; Footscray Park, St Albans and Werribee.

Planning research that involves the use of animals?

Researchers planning to undertake research that involves the use of animals will require approval from the AEEC.

The process of applying for animal ethics approval including the requisite forms and a list of submission dates is outlined on the Animal Ethics website at: http://research.vu.edu.au/ordsite/aeec.php.

There are also useful links to the Code of Practice and various alternatives to animal testing.

Researchers submitting a proposal must take into account the expected value of the knowledge to be gained, the justification for the project and all ethical and animal welfare aspects taking into consideration the 3Rs.
HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS & ANNUAL REPORTING

Researchers are reminded that the continued approval of research projects by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) is conditional upon the provision of a report within 12 months of the approval date or on completion of the project (whichever is earlier).

Principal Investigators are requested to forward Annual / Final reports to the HREC via the Ethics and Biosafety Administration Group located in the Office for Research, 6 Geelong Road.

The Annual/Final Report form is available online at: http://research.vu.edu.au/HRE_reporting.php

For further enquiries, please contact the Ethics and Biosafety Administration Group on 9919 4781.

INSTITUTE FOR SUSTAINABILITY & INNOVATION:
NEW RESEARCH GRANT

Professor Paul Boon was recently awarded a R&D grant, funded under the National Heritage Trust's Strategic Reserve, to map the extent of saltmarsh and mangroves around the Victoria coast.

The project team consists of Paul as Project Manager, as well as staff from Ecology Australia (Andrew McMahon and Geoff Carr), Biosis Research (Jeff Yugovic), Bushlands Pathways (Doug Frood) and the Arthur Rylah Institute for Ecological Research (Steve Sinclair and Matt White). An organisation with specific expertise in social marketing may joint the team in the near future.

The project will run until early 2009 and, inter alia, has the following aims:

1) develop a method for classifying coastal saltmarshes on the basis of their vegetation communities;
2) map the extent of coastal saltmarsh and mangroves and, where possible, infer likely distributions prior to European settlement;
3) undertake social marketing to determine the values attached to coastal saltmarsh;
4) develop and trial a method for assessing the condition of coastal saltmarsh;
5) model likely impacts arising from climate change and, in particular, sea level rise; and
6) develop a template for saltmarsh management for a limited number of saltmarsh sites along the coast.

The grant is for $470,000.

RESEARCH STUDENT INDUCTION

Forty newly enrolled research students from twelve different nations attended a two-day induction at the City campus. The students represent about half of the eighty new research students that Victoria University has taken on this year.

A formal welcome by the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Research and Region, The Director of Graduate Research and the Associate Director of Graduate Research was followed by sessions on 'getting the most out of supervision', 'understanding research', 'the rights and responsibilities of research students', introduction to administrative processes and procedures' and feedback from current research students on 'the good and not so good sides of life as a research student'. The two-day event finished with a social event involving food, drink and instruction in a range of different social dances.

One group of research students described the event as a "wonderful beginning" to their research career and, "A most useful time, both socially and academically."

RESEARCH TRAINING

Research training for research students and beginning researchers and supervisors has now begun. The model is currently being considered by the University of Hong-Kong as a model for their research student training. They were attracted by the strong emphasis on working with student writing. The Program focuses on topics and issues known to be of importance in developing research and supervisory expertise. It also helps research students to overcome the sense of isolation that is widely reported and acknowledged to be a major concern of research students and beginning supervisors.

The Program includes seven components, three specifically for research students, two for supervisors and two that are open to both students and supervisors. These include:

1. A weekly course for beginning research students.
2. A program offered collaboratively with the library to support research students in their information searching and using.
3. A one-day intensive session for students in the first half of their candidature particularly, those who are struggling to understand requirements and expectations.
4. Four separate courses to assist with different aspects of writing research, open to both students and supervisors.
5. A series of workshops that deal with essential processes and procedures related to doctoral candidature (for both supervisors and students).
6. A series of workshops and 'conversations' to assist supervisors to address key concerns, such as working with international students and supervising at a distance.
7. A one-day intensive session for supervisors who have students in the first part of their candidature.

ACF URBAN WATER MANAGEMENT SEMINAR

ACF Urban Water Management Seminar is to be held at Werribee at 2.00 pm on 9th May 2008. This is part of the current ‘Vision for Werribee Plains’ program that is run by DSE. Another round of funding for the ‘Vision for Werribee Plains’ is likely, so attendance is encouraged to show VU interest in the program. Areas of interest for the program include sustainable housing developments, the Werribee and Bacchus Marsh irrigation districts, and sustainable industry practices for west Melbourne.

GRANT OPPORTUNITY

AINSE POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS

Applications are now open for the 2008 series of the Australian Institute for Nuclear Science and Engineering (AINSE) Research Fellowships. Applications close with the Office for Research on 23 May and the 31 May 2008 with the agency.

AINSE Research Fellowships are tenable at any AINSE member university. Applicants are required to discuss, in the first instance, their research program with a chosen institution and provide an outline of the program agreed with the sponsoring university/institution. This year we have broadened the areas in which applications are encouraged, to include:

- neutron scattering;
- radiopharmaceuticals; and
- high-resolution climate records using nuclear techniques.

Further information including the application form and guidelines are available at: http://www.ainse.edu.au/ainse/for_academic_researchers/ainse_awards2.html

THANK YOU to all who contributed to the content of the Research Matters bulletin.