PROTECTING BOTTLENOSE DOLPHINS

Nicole Filby’s research aims to help protect the vulnerable bottlenose dolphins of Port Phillip Bay. She is undertaking her PhD at Victoria University with the Marine Ecology Research Group. Her research examines two facets of the dolphins: their behaviour, acoustic communication, photo-identification, distribution, and habitat, and their interaction with the dolphin-swim-tourism industry. Nicole explains that, “proper management and protection of species and ecosystems requires an understanding of their underlying biology and ecology and often available information is insufficient for this task.”

The population of bottlenose dolphins in Port Phillip Bay is considered vulnerable to extinction due to its small size, genetic distinctiveness, restricted home range, female natal philopatry, high levels of human activity in the area, and a non-compliant commercial dolphin-swim industry. Nicole hopes her research will ensure that the dolphins in Port Phillip Bay remain protected, enabling future generations the opportunity to view and interact with these creatures.

Conservation of the genetically unique population of bottlenose dolphins that inhabit Port Phillip Bay is Nicole’s main priority. This means gaining baseline information on their behaviour, life history and habitat use. A small part of her research is looking at the behaviour of a colony of Australian Fur Seals living on Chinaman’s Hat, Port Phillip Bay. “My research aims to raise awareness with the general population about ways they can help conserve the environment and increase their knowledge of our marine environment.”

Nicole is enthusiastic about the time her research allows her to spend out on the water. “Each day out in the field brings something different, whether it is an encounter with a little blue penguin that pops up next to the research boat or witnessing a pod of whales being harassed by sharks.”

Nicole studied marine biology at Monash University as part of her undergraduate studies and immediately decided this was where her future career would lie. Her Honours project focused on common dolphins in South Australia, working with the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society, investigating the “The distribution, abundance and photo-identification of common dolphins (Delphinus delphis) within St Vincent Gulf, South Australia”. From there Nicole worked on a number of different research projects, including research on humpback whales and common, bottlenose and hectors dolphins.

“I am passionate about dedicating my future career to research that focuses on the conservation of Australian marine mammals, as well as continuing to learn more about what their behaviour and acoustic communications can tell us.”

Nicole Filby, PhD student at VU
JOINT WINNER OF THE WALTER MCRAE RUSSELL AWARD FOR AUSTRALIAN LITERATURE

The 2010 Walter McRae Russell Award for Australian Literature has been jointly awarded to John McLaren for his biography, Journey Without Arrival: The Life and Writing of Vincent Buckley (ASP, Melbourne, 2009).

Emeritus Professor McLaren has had a long association with Victoria University. He was Professor Humanities here for many years until his retirement in 1997 and is a former editor of the literary journal Overland, which has long been based at the University.

He shared the award, with David Callahan for Rain Forest, a study of the works of the novelist Janet Turner Hospital.

The awards were announced at the Annual Conference of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature. The Award, which is named after a former President of the Australian Literature Society, who was particularly active in promoting local writing in the middle of the last century, is made every two years for the best book of literary scholarship with an Australian subject.

On receiving the Award, John McLaren thanked his research assistant, Bridie McCarthy, and Penelope Buckley, who had given him complete access to all of her late husband’s papers. McLaren did his research and writing with the help of an ARC Discovery Award.

The judges for the award were Dr. Alice Healy-Ingram (University of SA - Chair), Associate Professor Lyn Jacobs (Flinders University), Dr. Damien Barlow (La Trobe University).

In their report they wrote that “John McLaren’s literary biography explores the life-world of Vincent Buckley, from his Irish Catholic origins which drove the lyrical and sacramental heart of his poetry, to his political and religious affiliations at Melbourne University during the Cold War, his academic independence as a creative and passionate teacher, his time in a divided Ireland, and further to his relationships with his family. McLaren suggests that ‘in his poetry, Buckley sought to find the world’s meaning, but in his politics and polemic, he acted to shape it to his ideals’ (138). He pays close attention to the facts of a life ‘fully lived’ as he takes on the challenge of reading and interpreting the writing and indicating the evolving directions of Buckley’s ideas and achievement, and is modest about his intention ‘to open a number of conversations about Buckley and his work’ (vii) rather than offer an ‘authorised’ biography or ‘definitive portrait’. This insightful and well-researched assessment of Vincent Buckley’s contribution to Australian Literature well deserves the close attention of readers interested in poetry, Australian literature and cultural politics in the four decades ending with Buckley’s death in 1988.”

McLaren later expressed his gratitude to librarians in Melbourne and Canberra, and particularly to Mark Armstrong-Roper of the Victoria University Library.

GAY GAMES AUTHOR WINS NATIONAL BOOK AWARD

Dr Caroline Symons from the School of Sport & Exercise Science and ISEAL has won the Australian Society for Sports History Book Award for 2011 for her history of the Gay Games.

The citation for the award, announced last week, said the society chose to honour the book because it was a “meticulously researched and sophisticated social history” that promoted the “centrality, as opposed to the marginality of gay, lesbian and transgendered people in global sport”.

“The Committee considers The Gay Games: A History an engaging narrative that reveals both the lived experiences and personal stories of individuals, groups and communities involved in the organisation and participation of various Games.”

The society commended Dr Symons’ use of oral history, participant observation and archival research in her book, which traces the history of the Gay Games from its origins in 1980 to the Chicago Games in 2006.

Dr Symons, a historian and sociologist who lectures in sports sociology and event management, said the award was a great honour not just for her, but also for gay, lesbian, transgender and intersex communities across the world.

“I’ve had tremendous feedback from participants and organisers of this international event in sport that celebrates the social aspects of GLBTI culture as well as sporting performance,” she said.

“One of my motives in writing the book was to acknowledge and celebrate the inclusiveness of the diverse queer community. Another objective was to raise awareness of gay and lesbian sport among mainstream readers.

“Sporting and cultural events are often described in organisational terms. I chose a different approach in this work by looking at the social context and impact of the Games.”

Dr Symons led the first Australian study on homophobia in sport, Come Out To Play, sponsored by VicHealth and endorsed by the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission last year.

The study found that despite recent improvements, there is still widespread homophobia in club sport. The report called for awareness programs for sporting codes and clubs to promote an inclusive and welcoming culture for all participants, administrators and coaches.

The Gay Games: A History was published by Routledge in 2010. There are plans to bring out a soft-cover edition later this year.

NEW SCHOLARSHIPS FOSTER RESEARCH LINKS BETWEEN INDIA AND VICTORIA

Victoria India Doctoral Scholarships
Ten new doctoral scholarships have been established to offer some of India’s most talented scholars the opportunity to work with leading Victorian researchers.

The Victoria India Scholarship Program offers scholarships of $90,000, awarded to candidates over the duration of their doctoral studies. The scholarship also includes a full tuition fee waiver to help students complete their studies at one of nine universities throughout the state, including Victoria University.

To be eligible, applicants must be citizens of the Republic of India, accepted into a doctoral program at a participating Victorian university, intend to complete the majority of doctoral work in Victoria, and not currently hold a qualification regarded to be equivalent to an Australian research doctorate.

Applications for these new scholarships open on August 1, 2011. For more information, visit http://www.study.melbourne.vic.gov.au/studying_in_melbourne/research-study/research-scholarships2/victoria-india-doctoral-scholarship

SITE-BASED TEACHER EDUCATION

A team of researchers from the School of Education presented a symposium at Australian Teacher Education Association (ATEA) Conference, July, Melbourne. The symposium topic of Creating new practices of site-based teacher education reflected the School of Education’s research over a number of years. In placing larger cohorts of pre-service teachers in schools to work side-by-side with a University Educator, the intention is to theorise professional practice to a greater extent and thereby improve the quality of teaching and learning for all concerned.

Paper 1 was presented by Associate Professor Bill Eckersley on behalf of colleagues Dr Merryn Davies and Mr Simon Taylor. Dr Eckersley outlined findings from a currently funded research project and a set of ten findings that characterises site-based teacher education.

Paper 2 was presented by a panel of school partners and related to the establishment and implementation of school-university partnerships and pre-service teacher education. Presenters were Mr Chris Mooney, Assistant Principal, Point Cook Senior College, Ms Romina Pimpini and Ms Allison Jenner, mentor teachers from Sunbury Downs Secondary College and Ms Rachel Grima, VU graduate teacher, Manor Lakes P-12 College. Discussion raised many issues regarding site-based work and how collaboration of this type enables the theorising of professional practice.

Paper 3 was presented by Dr Neil Hooley on behalf of colleagues Ms Jo Williams, Ms Julie Arnold and Mr Tony Edwards. This paper discussed the theorised ideas for teacher education that are emerging from consolidated and longitudinal studies and the strengthening of associated practices.

Following the ATEA conference, the VU team was invited to present at a research colloquium involving eight projects funded by Department of Education and Early childhood Development (DEECD), Victoria. Addressed by the Minister for Higher Education and the Teaching Profession, Mr Peter Hall and attended by approximately forty representatives from DEECD, universities and organisations, the colloquium provided an opportunity for the VU team to expand on its research program and to engage in questions and discussion with other attendees.

The colloquium experience together with that of the ATEA conference indicates that the researching of site-based teacher education by School of Education is pushing forward into new vistas of understanding for schools and universities and confronting the many challenges that face teacher education in Australia.

ARTS FOR WELL-BEING - INDIGENOUS AND FIRST NATIONS PEOPLES

The role of the arts in well-being was the focus of a presentation by Davina Woods and Tarquam McKenna, from the School of Education, at the 2nd Asia Pacific Rim Counselling Conference in Hong Kong in the first week of June. Davina is pictured here with three other presenters: Nareida Wyatt of the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO), Katherine Bakos who does psychology and counselling work in Melbourne, and Michael Honeyselt of Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre, Melbourne. Davina and Tarquam’s presentation will be published in the next edition of the Asia Pacific Journal of Counselling. Their paper looks at the collaborative use of arts techniques for well-being and the specialised needs of Indigenous and First Nations peoples. The pair were invited to present to the conference based on their work in the area of Indigenisation and decolonisation.

VU RESEARCH FUNDING SCHEMES

The Office for Research administers three funding schemes to support research and research activities in attracting research grants, research publication outputs and supervising higher degree research completions.

VU RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT GRANTS SCHEME (RDGS)

The scheme aims to provide research funding to support Victoria University Early Career Researchers and newly appointed staff to engage in and develop high quality research projects, with preference for teams involving ‘mentors’ and/or strong research collaborations with industry, government and/or the community, to produce research outcomes of high quality and impact. Other benefits will be the development of an individual’s research track record, and increased capacity to attract additional external research income to the University.


VU OUT OF CYCLE RESEARCH COLLABORATIVE GRANTS SCHEME (GPSS)

The scheme is designed to support researchers who are seeking to conduct a 12 month research project in collaboration with an external partner organisation (industry, government or community) and who have secured a modest level of funding from the partner. External partners will be expected to provide support, cash and in-kind, which at least matches dollar for dollar the amount of the central element of the internal grant. Preference will be given to applications that have a high percentage of cash contribution from the external partner with strong opportunity to collaborate on future funding applications.


VU GRANT PREPARATION SUPPORT SCHEME (GPSS)

The scheme is a small grant designed to assist researchers at Victoria University to prepare VU applications for external research funding involving two
or more institutions, significant University collaboration
with industry, Australian Competitive Grants or
International Competitive Grants.


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