

November 2007  
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## FROM THE DIRECTOR

As the impact of the drought on communities, industries and the environment deepens in inland Australia, our multi-disciplinary research institute continues to play a vital role.

ILWS social researchers and economists have examined the impact of drought on communities, rural education and rural health. Biophysical researchers have been working closely with natural resource management agencies to document the effects of the drought and to provide tools for better decision making. The ILWS Integration programs (see reports on pg 11) have enabled researchers from different disciplines to combine their skills to address the complex issues associated with the drought. One program focuses on the interrelationships between climate change, demographic change and land management; the other focuses on how to improve the decision making associated with the use of environmental water.

A lot has been happening within ILWS. We performed very well in the CSU internal Research Quality Framework trial, which clearly demonstrated the impacts of our research. Our new Communications, Arts and Education discipline group has initiated some new projects and will help communicate our research outcomes to rural communities in innovative ways.

Congratulations to the Water Systems discipline group for achieving accreditation as the International Centre of Water for Food Security under the UNESCO International Hydrology program. Although the new centre will no longer be an ILWS discipline group, the water researchers in ILWS will continue to collaborate with Shahbaz Khan and his hydrology team in the future.

Finally, we all eagerly await the arrival of Professor Max Finlayson who will take up the positions of Strategic Professor in Ecology and Director of ILWS in early December. Through his past research and committee membership and his recent role at the International Water Management Institute Max has linked social, economic and ecological issues.

This experience will enhance his new role as ILWS Director –*Assoc Prof Robyn Watts, Acting Director*

## OPINION

*By Mark Frost, Lecturer in Agribusiness, School of Marketing and Management, and a member of the Institute's Economic & Regional Development Group.*

### Where to for wheat prices?

During late September- early October, 2007 Australian wheat prices approached record highs. At first glance these highs could be attributable to the effects of the drought. However, closer inspection of the wheat price suggests whilst the drought has had some impact, most of the increase is due to world factors.

In December 2006 the seasonal AWB Pool Price for wheat delivered to Bogan Gate NSW was quoted at \$197.50 per tonne, based on a world price of \$227 per tonne and a negative \$29.50 per tonne "basis" adjustment to cover silo, freight and port costs etc.

In mid October 2007, the comparable pool price was \$328 per tonne based on a world price of \$339 per tonne less a local basis adjustment of \$11. Over this time the world price has increased by \$112 per tonne to \$339 per tonne (despite the \$A moving higher), while the "basis" adjustment has improved by \$18.50 per tonne, from negative \$29.50 to negative \$11.

Therefore \$112 of the \$130.50 rise in the local cash price (from \$197.50 to \$339) is attributable to world related factors and only \$18.50 due to local drought demand related factors. The increase in the world price is recognition that for five of the last six years annual world wheat use has exceeded annual world production, such that stock levels are near historical lows, and will require several years of above average production to replenish them. Until this occurs a large fall in the world wheat price (and thus local price) is difficult to predict, irrespective of what happens locally.



### PROFILE: Dr Roderick Duncan

Bathurst economist Dr Roderick Duncan says he is an economist who doesn't care about money...but there are plenty of things he does care passionately about. Find out more on page 8.

# IN THE NEWS

## RURAL PROPERTY TURNOVER

Prof Allan Curtis continues to be in demand for his views on property turnover and the implications for rural communities and agriculture. He did:

- An interview on radio ABC Riverina on the future of Landcare, Aug 17
- An interview with radio ABC Riverlands and a TV interview on WIN TV Albury, Aug 20
- A story for The Weekly Times and then a radio interview for ABC radio's Country Hour, Aug 29
- A segment for ABC Radio National's Bush Telegraph, Sept 3
- An interview with Jane Cowan for ABC National's AM program and then ABC News online, Oct 25
- A story for the *Australian Financial Review*, Oct 29

## CLIMATE CHANGE AND OUR FORESTS

Dr Ian Lunt's views on how climate change will impact on our forests and bushland which are based on a long-term study on post-fire regeneration at Mt Pilot in Victoria, appeared in a *Border Mail* story 'Standing the test of time' on Aug 4 and he appeared on WIN TV Albury speaking on the same matter on Aug 9.

## WOLLEMI PINE

A study published by CSU (Dr Geoff Burrows), ANU and the Botanic Gardens Trust on the Wollemi Pine featured on ABC 702 Sydney on Aug 23.

## TRANSPORT REPORT

A/Prof Ian Gray spoke on radio ABC Riverina on transport infrastructure on Aug 15.

## THE STORY SEEKER

The *Border Mail* ran an extensive profile piece on ILWS adjunct research fellow Dr Jim Birkhead and the ethnographic surveys he is conducting on behalf of Indigenous interests in remote parts of Australia being targeted by mining companies. The story 'In search of sacred tales' featured as a three page spread on Aug 18.

## CROSS-BOUNDARY FARMING FORUM

A story on Prof David Brunckhorst, the director of the Institute for Rural Futures at the University of New England, featured in The *Border Mail* in the lead-up to the Institute-hosted regional Cross-Boundary Farming Forum, on Aug 25.

## GERMAN COLONIAL PERIOD

A/Prof Dirk Spennemann featured in a story in the Saipan Tribune regarding the launch of his new book on the German colonial period in the Marianas and a lecture he was to give on "The ABCs of Japanese WWII-era Gun Batteries: Aleutians, Belau, the CNMI and Beyond" on Aug 29.

## CLIMATE CHANGE

Prof Nick Klomp spoke on the effect of climate change on business on radio ABC Riverina on Sept 6.

## PLAINS WANDERER

Kylie Eklof who is researching the endangered Plains Wanderer was interviewed on radio ABC Riverina on Sept 7.

## THE FORESTS OF YESTERYEAR

PhD student Robyn Whipp's research on the historical vegetation change in the Pilliga State Forests in Northern NSW was the focus of a story 'Link to forest of the past' in the *Border Mail* on Sept 22.

## RULE OF THE STUDENT CUSTOMER

Geoff Bamber and Jenny Sappey's article 'Academics Fight Back Against Rule of the Student Customer', appeared in UK newspaper *The Guardian* on September 24.

## BETTER BUSH ON FARMS

The Institute hosted Better Bush on Farms Conference held at Thurgoona featured in the media with:

- A story in the *Border Mail* 'Value of Farm Trees Examined' with conference organiser Dr Peter Spooner before the event, Sept 13
- And coverage of the conference from WIN TV news, Sept 19
- Another *Border Mail* story featuring key speaker A/Prof Andrew Bennett from Deakin University, Sep 22
- An *The Australian Online* opinion piece, Oct 11

## WATER MATTERS

As water becomes an increasingly big issue Prof Shahbaz Khan is being called upon by the media for his expertise and opinion on irrigation water-use efficiency. He was:

- In the *Canberra Times*, Aug 22
- (for winning the 2007 Land & Water Australia Eureka Prize for Water Research & Innovation) on ABC Riverina news, Star FM Wagga, Prime TV Wagga, and Win TV Wagga, and featured in *The Land*, Aug 22; the *North Queensland Register*, Aug 23; and in the *Daily Advertiser*, Sept 4
- In *The Australian* regarding climate change on Sept 27 and 28; and in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Sept 29
- Asa Wahlquist, science writer with *The Australian* interviewed Shahbaz for an article 'A climate regime with a difference' for *The Weekend Australian*, Oct 13-14
- On ABC Rural news, Oct 29.

Other ILWS members speaking to the media on water issues included:

- Adjunct professor David Mitchell in *The Post*, Sept 6
- adjunct Daryl McGregor was on radio 2AY on Aug 20 and Win TV Aug 22 for commentary on the state of water storages in the Murray Darling Basin, and on CSU's Radio 2MCE (Bathurst) re his work with the Bathurst City Council and its grey water scheme, Oct 23
- Dr Ben Wilson speaking on the effects on river health caused by councils buying water from the Murray River on Prime TV Sept 28; and on water use on Prime TV, Oct 22
- Prof Kath Bowmer on ABC radio's Country Hour about the recent release of the National Water Commission assessment and proposed federal role in urban water, Oct 23.

## PROFESSIONALS IN REGIONAL CITIES

Kerry Grigg and Debra Da Silva participated in a series of interviews regarding the difficulties in attracting professionals to regional cities. They appeared on:

- Prime TV and Win TV, Sept 20
- ABC Radio Riverina morning show, Sept 21
- and had a story in the *Border Mail*, Sept 21.

Debra Da Silva also appeared on Prime News to comment on Albury City Council's new training program to increase local skills base in Council on Oct 4.

## OBVIOUS QUESTION

Dr Paul Humphries has a new radio spot on ABC North Coast at 9am each Monday where the Obvious Question will be asked and hopefully he can answer the question. Paul was also interviewed by ABC Riverland and featured in the *Sunraysia Daily* with regards to a seminar on explorer Blandowski's expedition to the Murray River held on Sept 21 to 23 in Mildura.

## CLIMATE CHANGE

Prof Kevin Parton's article 'Climate Change tough to Predict' appeared in the *Central Western Daily* on Oct 4. Kevin was also featured on ABC Radio talking about "Exchange Rate & Farm prices", Oct 3.

## RURAL TOWNS

Prof Marg Alston continues to be in demand by the media speaking on matters like keeping rural students at school (ABC Bush Telegraph Oct 5); city welfare recipients moving to regional Australia (ABC Regional Radio Oct 5); rural towns struggling with population boom (ABC Radio news Oct 8); her appointment as Australia's non-government representative to the 2008 United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (2BS Bathurst, Prime TV Wagga, Win TV Wagga, Oct 25, radio ABC Riverina, Oct 26).

## TOURISM QUALITY

A/Prof Dirk Spennemann was one of a group of 500 world experts taking part in a National Geographic project which assessed the tourism quality of the world's islands destinations. <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/traveler/features/islandsrated0711/islands.html>

## CONFLICT IN THE ARTIC

A/Prof Dirk Spennemann's public seminar on his recent visit to Kiska Island, part of the Aleutian Islands near Alaska, received good media coverage with:

- A feature story 'Treasure Island' in the *Border Mail*, Oct 20
- A radio interview on ABC Goulburn Murray, Oct 23
- And TV coverage with WIN TV, Oct 25

## ENERGY SAVINGS

A research project facilitating energy savings by CSU students at the Wagga Wagga campus has attracted media interest with researcher Karen Retra interviewed on ABC Riverina, Oct 23; on ABC Bathurst, on Prime TV Wagga and Star FM Wagga, Oct 24; and she featured in a story in the *Daily Advertiser*, Oct 26.

*Compiled with the assistance of CSU media*

## POSTGRADUATES

### ROBYN WHIPP



On her return from a three week trip to the U.S. in August, PhD student Robyn Whipp acknowledges the value of young researchers presenting at overseas conferences.

*Photograph by Simon Dallinger, courtesy Border Mail*

"In the final years of our PhDs we are encouraged to present overseas for reasons that include getting our work out there, making contacts, getting a little bit better known in the international community, and for the experience," says Robyn, who is based at the Thurgoon campus. Robyn is in her final year of a PhD looking at 'Historical vegetation changes in the Pilliga State Forests in northern NSW' under principal supervisor Dr Ian Lunt.

With the assistance of two travel grants, one from the CRC for Plant-Based Management of Dryland Salinity, and the other from the Institute's Ecology and Biodiversity discipline group, she travelled to the U.S. to present a paper and meet with fellow researchers. Her paper at the Ecology Society of America's joint meeting with the Society for Ecological Restoration was on "The impacts of fire and timber harvesting on long term vegetation in an Australian mixed species forest." The theme of the conference was "Ecology-based restoration in a changing world." Robyn says her attendance at the conference gave her the opportunity to hear talks on ecosystems similar to those in Australia "in particular the Ponderosa pine forests of the south-western U.S., which are ecologically quite simi-

lar to the *Callitris-Eucalyptus* forests of inland NSW." A lot of the focus on Ponderosa pine ecosystems has been on the changes, and in particular the thickening that has occurred as a result of fire suppression/fire exclusion and climate variability, particularly periods of high rainfall, which has also happened in *Callitris* forests in Australia," says Robyn. "Yet reading about something is not the same thing as seeing it and talking to people who study it."

After the conference Robyn experienced working in the field in New Mexico with Dr Pete Fulé, from Northern Arizona University, "who was very generous with his time." She also got to meet researchers from Arizona, Colorado and New Mexico who were working on developing the most appropriate ecological restoration techniques for use in Ponderosa pine and similar coniferous forests. Robyn says researchers are looking at how to best manage the forests to bring them back to what they used to be like - more of a grassy woodland than a thick forest. Experimental management techniques involve thinning and then the reintroduction of fire.

"But it's a tricky thing to do," says Robyn. "Once you take fire out of a system, putting it back won't necessarily return that system to the way it once was. The fuel structure changes and this can make fires behave differently. To get the same sort of fires back, you may need to manipulate the fuels first." Robyn says more research on this type of forest change had been done in the U.S. than in Australia and there were more forests of that particular type. "We're still looking at how our forests have changed," she says. "Working out exactly what that should mean for managing them is still a little way down the track for us. However what they have done and are doing in the U.S. can inform and direct our research here in Australia. Ecological theory the world over is like that. Ecosystems in similar environments often have similar characteristics, but each system is unique, and you have to do the research to see which general ecological principles apply in each one. Having gone to America and seen these forests, I have a much better understanding of what is different, and what is the same."

## PHD NEWS

**Wendy March** (principal supervisor A/Prof David Watson, Dr Ben Wilson) has submitted her thesis "The impact of an Australian Mistletoe, *Amyema miquelii* (Loranthaceae) on nutrient cycling in eucalypt forests and woodlands." Her thesis has been accepted and Wendy is now working at the Australian Bureau of Statistics in Adelaide.

**Natasha Schedvin** (principal supervisor A/Prof David Watson, Dr Gary Luck & Rod Cavanagh, NSW Forests) has submitted her thesis on "Distributional; Ecology of the Barking Owl (*Ninox connivens connivens*) in Victoria, Australia." Natasha is now working at Healesville Sanctuary coordinating captive breeding programs for reintroduction to the wild. Last year Natasha worked at Scotia Sanctuary, between Broken Hill and Wentworth, an Australian Wildlife Conservancy property.

**Laurence Barea** (principal supervisor A/Prof David Watson & Dr Gary Luck) has handed in his thesis on "Interactions Between Frugivores and their Resources. A Case Study with the Painted Honeyeater *Grantiella picta* - an Australian Mistletoe Specialist". Laurence has returned to his home town of Hamilton in New Zealand to take up a position with New Zealand's Department of Conservation where he will be responsible for coordinating current research for the group, integrating across ecological, social and cultural programmes.

**Nicky Bruce** (principal supervisor Dr Ian Lunt & Dr Mohammad Abuzar (DPI) and Meredith Mitchell (DPI) has had her thesis "A *Birds Eye View*: development of a remote sensing approach to monitoring semi-arid grasslands for biodiversity conservation" examined. It will be finalised in the next month.

**Jessica MacGregor's** (principal supervisor Prof Nick Klomp, and Darren Baldwin and Gavin Rees from MDFRC) thesis on "Effects of Inundation and Cattle Grazing on Floodplain Soil Carbon Dynamics and Microbial Community Structure" has been finalised.

## POSTGRADUATES (cont.)

**Jane Dowling** (principal supervisor Prof Marg Alston) has had her thesis on "Women's contribution to Australian fishing Industry Sustainability" accepted. Jane is working at TAFE at Nowra and has been doing some research projects with Prof Alston.

**Pat Hamilton** (principal supervisor Prof Marg Alston) has had her thesis on "Building and Nurturing a Learning Community in the Australian Grains Industry" accepted. She is now on a caravan tour of Australia.

**Gill Earl** presented and discussed CSU School of Environmental Science's submission to the 'Land and Biodiversity at a time of Climate Change' consultation paper with a panel which included Sir Gustav Nossal (DSE Chief Scientist and Chair of the Scientific Reference Group for the Land and Biodiversity White Paper); Mick Murphy (Chair of the Stakeholder Reference Group for the Land and Biodiversity White Paper) and Kevin Love (DSE Deputy Secretary) in Melbourne on Aug 22.

**Jodie Kleinschafer** has begun focus groups for her thesis project "Energy efficiency and residential households: Managing electricity demand". These focus groups will look at whether householders would prefer to increase their energy efficiency through 1) *investment* in more energy efficient appliances or improving the efficiency of their dwelling, or 2) the *curtailment* of inefficient actions such as leaving lights on when there is nobody home. These focus groups will be held in Bathurst, Port Macquarie, and the Bega Valley (To be confirmed) until February. If you are interested in participating in a focus group please contact Jodie on [jkleinschafer@csu.edu.au](mailto:jkleinschafer@csu.edu.au).

And welcome to new PhD student in Sociology **Emma Mclean** who started in August. Emma will be exploring Australia's obesity epidemic with principal supervisor Dr Angela Ragusa and Assoc Prof Maree Simpson.

And to **Sonia Graham**, supervisors Ian Gray (CRSR) and Clive Spash (from CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems) whose PhD is going to look at two key questions: Does trust influence the uptake and outcomes of natural resource management (NRM) policies in Australia? If so, how can trust between landholders and institutions be strengthened?

## CONFERENCES, SEMINARS & WORKSHOPS

### **MASCULINITY AND AGRICULTURE**

Ian Coldwell presented a paper on 'An Emerging Dialogic Practice of Masculinity and Agriculture in the Transition to Sustainable Farming and Food Production in Australia' at the Congress of the European Society of Rural Sociology Conference, Wageningen, The Netherlands, August 2007. (Working Group 15 Gender Studies and Rural Development: Towards a New Research Agenda).

### **PNG ECONOMICS**

Dr Roderick Duncan presented "Agricultural productivity and the electoral cycle in Papua New Guinea" to the School of Marketing and Management on Aug 1. Dr Duncan spoke on his findings of little evidence for the popular theory of a link between agricultural output in export cash crops and PNG elections. What did appear true in his research was that recent El Nino-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) events in PNG have occurred around election years. It was found that these ENSO events and the droughts and floods that follow have impacted PNG agricultural productivity.

### **RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES WITH CHINA**

Associate Professor Kishor Sharma spoke on "Research Opportunities with Partner Institutions in China" in a joint seminar for the School of Accounting & Computer Science, & School of Marketing and Management on Aug 24. He addressed CSU's International Education Strategy and the Faculty of Business encouraging

staff to undertake research of national and international significance together with staff from partner universities.

### **BUSH STONE CURLEWS**

Elisa Tack gave a presentation at the Murrumbidgee Landcare Annual Forum in Narrandera on Aug 17 on the habitat requirements of Bush stone-curlews entitled: Conservation of Bush stone-curlews in agricultural landscapes; and to the Albury Probus Club Meeting on Aug 27 on Caring for the Bush stone-curlew.

### **SUSTAINABILITY RESEARCH & ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM**

Dr Angela Ragusa presented "How a sociological approach can assist sustainability research" at the Environmental Assets Integration Group Workshop in Beechworth, Aug 30 and "Ideology & Environmental Activism in Australian News Media" at the School of Humanities & Social Sciences Research Seminar Series in Wagga, Sep 5.

### **CROSS-BOUNDARY FARMING FORUM**

Thirty-one participants from different locations and of different backgrounds attended this forum on Sept 7. Participants included conventional, hobby, and organic farmers; four PhD students; a representative of Murrumbidgee CMA; councillors from Wagga; a property lawyer; representatives of the NSW Farmers' Association, the Country Women's Association and of Department of Primary Industries in Ballarat; a young 'intern' from Muenster in Germany who is connected with the CSIRO at CSU; academics from different Schools of CSU; a Greens Senator from Western Australia, and a National Party Senator from Sydney. David Brunckhorst, Professor and Director of Rural Futures, University of New England, Armidale, was the main speaker and sparked a great deal of interest.

Cross boundary farming is a method which has been used in continental Europe for centuries: adjacent properties are being managed together, the livestock is moved from one property to the next, and crops are planted on alternate years. The titles of the farms remain with the original owners. David Brunckhorst was the mastermind of such a program between 1999 and 2004 called the *Tilbuster Commons Project*. During the discussions it became clear that there is a role for individual farm ownership, collective management and for sharing the resources. Such a system can contribute to more sustainable farming practices in Australia.

### **FOOD & HEALTH**

From Sept 1-10, PhD student Barbara Parker participated in an intensive European Summer School convened by the European Centre for the History and Culture of Food, hosted by the University of Tours in France. The session was titled: Food, Food Fears and Health. Twenty two students from all over the world were invited to attend and participate. Barbara's current PhD research examines how rural and regional women construct social meaning about health and risk in relation to their everyday food choices.

### **FLEXIBLE DELIVERY IN BUSINESS SCHOOLS**

Greg Bamber (Griffith University) presented his and Jenny Sappé's paper "Flexible Delivery in Business Schools: A winning strategy or Pandora's box?" at the 2007 British Academy of Management Conference, London, September. It was awarded best paper in the Human Resource Management Stream. This paper was also presented at staff seminars at The University of Newcastle Business School, UK and Manchester University Business School, UK, September 2007.

### **FOR MEMBERS**

*Check out the latest news at our web page at [www.csu.edu.au/research/ilws](http://www.csu.edu.au/research/ilws) and the For members page (you'll need a CSU account to login) which has an updated events diary, the submission for the Institute's CSU Research Quality Framework (2007 trial) and minutes of various groups' meetings.*

## BETTER BUSH ON FARMS

The positive feedback in the evaluation forms from the Better Bush on Farms one-day conference on Sept 19 at Thurgoona is testament to the success of the day attended by over 140 people. Comments like "relevant to my research", "useful information", "questions got the audience thinking and paying attention" confirmed that the aim of the conference, to communicate the latest ecological research in relation to nature conservation on farms, with emphasis on vegetation management, was met. The conference drew on the work of members of the Institute's Ecology & Biodiversity group (Ian Lunt, Allison Skinner, Peter Spooner (conference organiser) & Dave Watson); scientists at CSIRO involved in the Better Knowledge Better Bush project, and other leading scientists on the topic i.e. Assoc Prof Andrew Bennett, Deakin University and Prof Andrew Young, CSIRO Plant Industry. Sponsors included ILWS, Better Knowledge Better Bush project, CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems, and Grassy Box Woodland Conservation Management Network. There was also a lunch-time poster and information session with displays by the above sponsors, Greening Australia, Land & Water Australia, and the NSW Murray Wetlands Working Group. In his report on the conference, Peter recommended the conference be a 'kickstart' for an annual series of conferences

(same place/same time/similar format) but on different themes each year, for example, social/water/fauna/vegetation.

*At the Better Bush on Farms conference (L to R) Trevor Verlin, Prof Andrew Bennett, and Paul Ryan from CSIRO*



## PACIFIC POLITICS

Satish Chand and Roderick Duncan presented their paper "Strengthening political parties in the Pacific" at Executive Power and the Battle for Parliamentary Confidence in the Pacific Islands in Port Vila, Vanuatu, Sept 21 to 23. This paper discussed how the instability of Pacific politics is often traced to the weakness of its political organisations.

## ENERGY SAVINGS

Karen Retra presented a talk on a research project "Facilitating energy saving behaviours among university student residents" at the Australasian Campuses Towards Sustainability (ACTS) conference held in the Blue Mountains on Oct 3 to 5.

## ENTOMOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Three of the Institute's PhD students cleaned up at the 38th Australian Entomological Society conference held in Beechworth Sept 23 to 26. Anna Burns (best student oral presentation) spoke on Diversity and assemblage composition of arthropods inhabiting mistletoe in fragmented woodlands; Matt Humphrey (best student poster award) on The impacts of increasing soil salinities in epigeal invertebrate communities in a floodplain ecosystem in South Australia; and Cathy Car (equal 2nd best student oral presentation award) on Hundreds of legs, dozens of species: New South Wales millipedes.

## WOLLEMI PINE

Dr Geoff Burrows was an invited speaker at Australian Societies for Growing Australian Plants biennial national conference Newcastle 1-5 October where he spoke on 'The Wollemi pine – more than just the dinosaur tree?'

## TAXONOMY FORUM

Cathy Car was one of 80 representatives from various organisations and institutions who attended a National Taxonomy Forum to discuss the challenges facing modern taxonomy at the Australian Museum in Sydney on Oct 4 and 5.

## CONFLICT IN THE ARTIC

Assoc Prof Dirk Spennemann's recent visit to the remote Kiska Island between Alaska and Russia was the focus of an ILWS hosted event at the Bandiana Army Museum in Wodonga on Oct 25. Sixty three people, including a number of army personnel and members of the region's RSL clubs, came along to hear Dirk's interesting lecture "Conflict in the Arctic: reminders of the Japanese invasion of Alaska". Dirk visited the island (a two day boat trip from

the island of Adak) at the request of the US Fish and Wildlife Service to research the big guns and military relics left on the island after it was abandoned by the Japanese in 1943.



*Manager of the Army Museum at Bandiana, Major Graham Docksey (left) and A/Prof Dirk Spennemann*

## COMING UP

### E-CREW WORKSHOP

The Environmental and Resource Economics Early-Career Researcher Workshop (E-CReW) was held on Nov 12 & 13 at the Bathurst campus. The workshop aimed to provide a forum for early career researchers to interact with and receive feedback on their research from more experienced researchers, and to meet others at a similar stage in their careers. It also provided an opportunity for employers to meet new graduates and those who are soon to complete their degrees, and for research funding agencies to discuss current research needs. Mentors attending this year's E-CReW include Prof Michael Hanemann (University of California) who is the head of the California Climate Change Centre and Prof Laura Taylor (University of North Carolina). Other mentors included Prof John Rolf (CQU) and Prof Allan Curtis (CSU), Dr David Godden (DECC), Dr Deborah Peterson (VIC DPI), and Dr Don Gunsekera (ABARE). Visit [www.ecrew.org.au](http://www.ecrew.org.au) for more information.

### TRUST IN BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS

A workshop will be run on Nov 21 from 12:30 to 2:30 pm to showcase the results from David Dowell's Doctoral thesis which focuses on the development of trust in business-to-business relationships and its effect on firm performance. The results were extracted and analysed using quantitative methods overseen by Professor Mark Morrison. Prof Louise Young (UTS), Prof Ian Wilkinson (UNSW), and Prof Denise Jarratt (CSU) will attend the workshop and comment on the significance of David's contributions. Prof Young will also give a presentation from her own research prior to David's. For more information or to register for this workshop please contact Therese Formosa at [tformosa@csu.edu.au](mailto:tformosa@csu.edu.au).

### BOOK LAUNCH

The launch of Dr Rosemary Black's new book *Quality Assurance and Certification in Ecotourism* by Prof Gail Whiteford, head of campus, Albury-Wodonga, will be held at 12 noon at the Thurgoona campus on Nov 20.

### PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION

Images from A/Prof David Watson's photographic collection taken on his trips to the rainforests of Latin South America will be displayed at a dedicated exhibition at the Albury Library Museum from 11 Jan – 24 Feb, 2008. Hosted by ILWS's ecology discipline group the exhibition will be launched on Thursday 7 February by David Watson with a talk. Limited edition prints will be available for sale and all proceeds will go to the group to fund future activities. Albury City Council is collaborating closely with ILWS to present the exhibition and launch.

## COMING UP (CONT.)

### BAT CONFERENCE

The Australasian Bat Society will hold their annual conference from 25 - 28 March 2008 at CSU's Thurgoona campus. Former CSU employee Craig Grabham is on the organising committee and expects the conference to attract more than 100 delegates. ILWS is a sponsor of the event. For more information visit <http://batcall.csu.edu.au/abs/absmain.htm>

### FORESTRY CONFERENCE

ILWS is a key supporter of the Australian Forest Growers Biennial Conference which will be held from 19 – 22 October 2008 at the Albury Convention Centre. The conference is themed "Forestry for a better future: climate, commerce and communities" and will include a full-day field trip. See more information at [www.afg.asn.au](http://www.afg.asn.au). Dr Digby Race is convening the conference and supported by a committee of including PhD student Hugh Stewart, ILWS conference and events coordinator Kate Roberts, along with a diverse group of forest agency and company staff, and private growers.

### ICSD ASIA-PACIFIC BRANCH BIENNIAL CONFERENCE IN NEPAL

Associate Professor Manohar Pawar, President of the International Consortium for Social Development, Asia-Pacific Branch, will organise the branch biennial conference on 'social development and transition: Paths for global-local partnership' in Kathmandu, Nepal, 29-31 October 2008, in collaboration with the Department of Social Work at Kadambari Memorial College of Science and Management (Purbanchal University affiliate, Nepal).

*Last chance for support for events in the first half of 2008. If you have an idea for a workshop, conference or seminar get it touch with Kate Roberts and ILWS may be able to provide financial or professional support. We are finalising the calendar of events up to June 2008 so if there is something you would like to do, please drop an email to [kroberts@csu.edu.au](mailto:kroberts@csu.edu.au).*

## PUBLICATIONS

### PEER-REVIEWED PAPERS

**Barea, L., Watson, D.M.** (2007) Temporal variation in food resources determines onset of breeding in an Australian mistletoe specialist. *Emu* 107: 203–209

**Burrows, G. E., Meagher, P. F. and Heady, R. D.** (2007). The Wollemi pine's unusual plumbing. *Australasian Science* 28 (7):30-32.

**Boylan, C., and Munsch, T.** (2007) The impact of an immersion experience in Alaskan native cultural life on pre-service teachers. *Education in Rural Australia*, 17,(1): 71-80.

**Coldwell, I.** (2007) Young farmers, masculinities and the embodiment of farming practices in an Australian setting. *Rural Society* 2007 17 (1): 19-33

**Hughes, J. D., S. Khan, R. S. Crosbie, S. Helliwell, and D. L. Michalk.** (2007) Runoff and solute mobilisation processes in a semi-arid headwater catchment. *Water Resources Research* 43:W09402,doi:09410.01029/02006WR05465.

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**Sappey, J. and Bamber, G.** (Griffith University) (2007) "Flexible Delivery in Business Schools: A winning strategy or Pandora's box?", *Proceedings of the 2007 British Academy of Management Conference*, London, Sept 2007.

**Sappey, J. and Bamber, G.** (2007) "Towards a Tripartite Model of the Employment Relationship: Employers, Employees and Customers", *Proceedings of the Employment Research Unit 2007 Conference*, Cardiff University, Sept 2007.

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## NEWSLETTERS

Forestry Partnerships in Indonesia and Australia. Project newsletter # 4, July 2007.

## RURAL SOCIETY

The editors are delighted to present the 2007 special issue on Social Capital. We have been pleased to work with Dr Dimitria Giorgas as guest editor over the past year to bring to you some of the key writers in the field of social capital but especially in the rural context. Dr Giorgas writes in her guest editorial about the genesis of this special issue. 'In December 2004, around 60 delegates with diverse experiences and backgrounds came together in Wagga Wagga to discuss conceptual and practical issues concerning social capital. As convener of this symposium - *Social Capital: past, present and future* - I felt that a thorough debate on the significance of social capital was well overdue. The main question put to the symposium was whether social capital had lost its appeal, how it compares to other concepts such as community capacity building and to provide a critical assessment of its usefulness as a policy tool. Overall, 20 research papers were presented at the one-day symposium, six of which have been included in this volume. Collectively, the papers in this special edition of *Rural Society* signify an important contribution to current debates on conceptual and practical applications of social capital and further provide a summary and critique of research and policy issues concerning rural social capital to date.'

-*Marion Bannister and John Connors, Editors, Rural Society*

## CALL FOR RURAL SOCIETY JOURNAL ARTICLES

Each year one edition of *Rural Society*, a refereed journal, is devoted to a particular theme. In 2008 the themed issue will focus on water and gender. Priority will be given to papers that synthesise issues by international, regional or country analysis. Case studies are also appropriate. Possible topic areas include:

- Gender issues relating to the uses and value of water, policy and innovation in the areas of fisheries, food and agriculture, health and sanitation, environment and biodiversity, urban welfare, industry, mining and energy, sacred and spiritual values, recreation and tourism
- Policy and innovation could include aspects of gender and water that connect vulnerability assessment, mechanisms for water sharing, alleviation of poverty, consequences of international trade, climate change, population and demography, representation, agency and networking, aid, education and communication, and technological solutions

Prospective authors are invited to submit an abstract of up to 200 words for consideration by the referees. Abstracts should be sent as email attachments in Microsoft Word Rich Text Format to the Editor of *Rural Society*, Marion Bannister, at [mbannister@csu.edu.au](mailto:mbannister@csu.edu.au). Identifying information such as author's name and affiliation should not be included in the body of the abstract document. The deadline for receipt of abstracts is Nov 16 2007. Other than generic inquiries may be directed to the guest editor by emailing Prof Kath Bowmer on [kbowmer@csu.edu.au](mailto:kbowmer@csu.edu.au).

## GRANTS

### NATIONALLY COMPETITIVE GRANTS

Department of Environment and Water, **Commonwealth Environmental Research Facilities Program (CERF Landscape Logic): Project 2: social research.** (2007/09). \$570,000. This three-year research program includes projects examining the influence of natural resource management investments, climate change and demographic change (to landholders who are not farmers by occupation) on changes in vegetation condition in northern Victoria; and exploring the links between catchment management and riparian zone condition in Tasmania. A/Prof Allan Curtis, Dr Digby Race, Royce Sample, Dr Rik Thwaites and Dr Catherine Allan.

**Extreme weather and population health in Australia: risk assessment, prediction of health impacts and disease burden, and adaptive strategy exploration.** ARC Discovery (\$189 485) Dr P Bi; A/Prof P Ryan; Prof P Weinstein; A/Prof DL Pisaniello; **Prof KA Parton**; Mr JR Moss; A/Prof AJ Braunack-Mayer.

**On-line student supervision training - accessible and cooperative learning in social work**, Carrick grant Dr Wendy Bowles, Ms Jennifer McKinnon and Dr Mike Collingridge. (2007/8) (\$172,079)

### RESEARCH GRANTS

Natural Heritage Trust: **Landholder adaptation to climate variability.** Allan Curtis and Rik Thwaites. (2007/08). \$88,000.

Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority: **Understanding landholder management of the Mid-Goulburn River frontage.** Allan Curtis and Digby Race. (2007/08). \$45,000.

**Health and education implications of China's accession to WTO.**ARC-APFRN (\$6500) A/ Prof Kishor Sharma & Dr Yapa Bandara.

**Optimising frog breeding responses to flooding in managed wetlands.** NSW Murray Wetlands Working Group, A/Prof Robyn Watts, Dr Skye Wassens.(2007/8) \$90,000.

**Monitoring of pulsed releases to the Mitta Mitta River, Victoria.** Murray-Darling Basin Commission and River Murray Water A/Prof Robyn Watts (Team Leader), Dr Darren Ryder, Dr Adrienne Burns, Dr Andrea Wilson, Dr Remy Dehaan, and Alek Zander. (2007/8) \$27,000

## DR RODERICK DUNCAN



**Dr Roderick Duncan says he is an economist who doesn't care about money!**

What this Bathurst researcher is interested in is the environment, politics, demography and biology. "I'm as broad-minded an economist as you can get," says Rod, an economics lecturer with the School of Marketing and Management and associate leader of the Institute's Economics and Regional Development group. "I do research on Papua New Guinea; on women and education and marriage; on global climate modelling; on environ-

mental and resource economics....I think as an economist you have a bag of tricks that you apply to different problems."

Rod, 39, and his wife Colette Keen (who tutors in the School of Communications at CSU and teaches at Western TAFE) came back to Australia after living in America four years ago to raise their two sons, aged four and six years. With 'three and a half degrees' under his belt (one in law, one in economics, a PhD from Stanford University and a professional certificate as a solicitor in NSW) Rod taught at the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, Georgia, for four years before accepting a position at CSU. Because of his interest in trade development in developing countries, Rod's PhD involved looking at big contracts between first world country companies and developing countries where a large company would put millions of dollars into a third world country essentially on trust and goodwill, and then the developing country would dishonour or negate the contract.

"There were two reasons why this could happen," says Rod. "One was politics i.e. a change in government or a revolution, or, two, there was good money in it. My research found it was the latter reason, that they grabbed 'the goose that laid the golden egg' as it were. No one ever seized a mine that was worthless or an industry that was losing money." Rod further researched what happened afterwards and found that they "grabbed the goose that golden that laid the golden egg and promptly killed it." "You have countries like what is now the Congo and Zambia who used to be the world's largest copper producers," says Rod. "But in the 1960s they seized their copper mines and are now no longer on the map. Basically they ran the industry into the ground and didn't reinvest or continue to explore."

Rod, who wants to help developing countries design institutions that work better, does a lot of work in the Pacific Island countries. His interests include in civil conflict and strife and how that is related to mineral resources. "In a lot of cases you can trace civil wars back to resource wealth," he says. "This leads to a bigger question. Why is it that countries that are blessed with heaps of natural resources are such disasters? You would think that being given huge amounts of money is a good thing (like Nigeria) but in fact it has done no good at all."

In September he presented a paper at a conference in Vanuatu, on political problems in the Pacific, about the political system in PNG and how it could be reformed to work better. "In the Pacific politics doesn't work very well," explains Rod. "There is what you call the 'big man' politics and his job is to reward or give jobs to all his relatives. He is very independent because there are no political parties as such. I think the cure is to strengthen political parties."

Another conference paper he presented in July in PNG was on

agricultural productivity and politics in PNG. "What I found was that, in recent years at least, the election cycle has cycled with El Nino and have been bad years for agricultural output," says Rod. "It may not be the politics, it might just be the weather."

Rod is also currently re-writing a paper on climate modelling and global warming and the idea that by of actually subsidising the development of alternative energy we could in fact accelerate global warming. "If we created a car that ran on water, for example, we could actually worsen the problem because there would be a flood of cheap oil on the market," he said. "We have to be careful on our policies on alternative fuels....inadvertently we could worsen the problem. It sounds perverse but that happens a lot in economics, good intentions but bad results."

Rod is part of a research team (with Dr Jennifer Sappey and Dr Zelma Bone) working on an ERD funded project looking at aging and the provision of services in the central west. Rod, who will be looking at transport planning, says the group hope to put the project up as an ARC Linkage proposal. "The problem is that a lot of volunteer providers who do the service provision here don't do a lot of long term planning," he says. "What happens in 10 years time when a lot of the baby boomers come to the country and there is this burst in the demand for services?"

He and Assoc Prof Mark Morrison are working on a paper for the Australian Agricultural and Resource Economics Society conference next year on environmental offsets, where environmental offsets are being used to manage wetlands. "I'm hoping to get teaching buyout next year so I can have time to talk to ecologists and write another paper that includes both ecologists' ideas about equivalents, and the economists' ideas about how to set systems up," says Rod. However Rod is well aware that that may not be as simple as it sounds. "Interdisciplinary work is hard," he says. "It is easy to talk to another economist, you speak the same language and have a lot of the same assumptions, but if you talk to an ecologist, at some point, you don't even understand what the other person is saying so it is harder, and takes longer. I think we underestimate the difficulty." Nonetheless Rod is keen to work with ecologists and ILWS members from other disciplines and invites them to contact him to share ideas.

## DR ROBYN MASON

*By Kate Roberts*



**Dr Robyn Mason has returned from a visit to Alice Springs, where she had her first teaching post as a graduate at Alice Springs High School in the early 80's.**

This time around she visited the remote community in her capacity as a social work lecturer with CSU to visit students on placement and to run a professional development session about remote practice for social workers and allied health professionals. "Running the development session is part of a continuing research collaboration with colleagues at the University of Ballarat where we are looking at how rural workers cope with blurred boundaries, when the personal and professional role overlap" says Robyn, a member of the Institute's Rural Social Research discipline group. "For example how to behave when you see a client in the supermarket." Robyn says the research collaboration began with a small pilot project in 2000. "A colleague did a PhD on the subject and we have just received a grant from CSU to extend the study to bi-cultural workers in Sydney," she says.

"We want to find out whether this is just a rural phenomenon or is it peculiar to small communities where there are strong ties and where everyone knows everyone. Is there a similar experience in indigenous, migrant and rural communities? We will work with a Sydney based organisation that assists asylum seekers and refugees. We want to establish if the Sydney migrant experience aligns with what rural workers have said."

Robyn who took up social work "in middle life" and has worked in a range of fields including aged care, mental health, and sexual assault, made the leap to academia, teaching at first the University of Ballarat and then the University of Melbourne for more than ten years. She completed a PhD at the University of Melbourne in 2004, where she explored how women's services in rural Australia contributed to women's social citizenship. She found that, contrary to popular belief, women's services outside the major cities in Australia are often more overtly feminist than their city sisters.

With a preference for country living and research interests centred around rural people, Robyn picked CSU when she decided she was ready for a change. "If you are going to do research about rural women and rural practice you wouldn't go anywhere else," she says. "This is the best place in the country to do it and particularly as Margaret Alston who is a leader in the field is based here."

Robyn commenced full-time at CSU in January this year. She teaches a new subject in social work which is offered to students in their final year to integrate all the theory and practice learned over the course of the degree. Robyn is currently seeking further funding for a research project looking at the services available for rural women who have been sexually assaulted. In collaboration with Prof Margaret Alston she received a linkage development grant to look at young women's experiences of sexual assault, what services are available and how this can be improved. The pair now want to extend this further to do a rural/urban comparison and are keen to get a remote health service on board.

Robyn is passionate about women's issues and believes CSU needs to recruit more PhDs around the issue. But she thinks it has gone out of fashion and notes that governments don't talk about women's issues anymore. "We need to promote women's issues, get it back into the curriculum and get it back into policy," she says. "Young women need to understand how much has been lost – how much we've fought for and how much of that has been lost. If we are going to regain the influence at policy level, then research is one way of doing it."

Robyn is also keen to see more research in social work. "I think we can do more collaborative research on things like how do we teach indigenous students and how do we get more indigenous women to be social workers," she says. "These are all areas that are crying out for more attention." Robyn is a member of the teaching and learning committee in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences and supervises a number of masters and honours students.



## JOHN RAFFERTY

As John Rafferty talks about his career and his interests, it's easy to see where his 'dream' for the University's campus at Thurgoona – an international environmental awareness centre- has come from.

John, 40, who lists his research interests as environmental education and tracking change in institutions, is a

lecturer with the Murray School of Education, and co-coordinator of the Institute's new Communication, Arts and Education discipline group. He was a primary school teacher for 15 years working in the ACT, NSW and Victoria before his studies (a Graduate Diploma in Applied Science, Masters and then Doctorate) and a year long secondment opportunity led him to an academic path with CSU five years ago.

John submitted his thesis on school reform in August this year. "I was looking at what happens when a major reform process comes into a school, using discourse analysis (qualitative interviewing) as my methodology," says John who found out that major reform programs come with very strong discourse, what he describes as "a strong ideology that brings about unexpected as well as expected changes. He is planning to take discourse analysis as a methodology to look at environmental education and environmental education initiatives.

John teaches science and technology, and class room management in primary schools and is developing a series of subjects on environmental sustainability in education. John says his interest in the environment and sustainability came from growing up in the logging/fishing town of Eden on the NSW South Coast; and a strong affiliation with industry and education. "I was always very passionate about environmental education when I was teaching in primary schools," says John, one of the key players in the Institute's new discipline group.

John sees communication, arts and education as an "unexplored and neglected area with regards to environmental education" and believes there are personnel within the University who would be able to contribute to making the new discipline group "a real focal point and perhaps enhance the work of the other discipline groups." "I think CAE could be a very powerful and effective group and has the potential to actually take a leading role in raising awareness of environmental issues," says John.

John says the CAE had a number of existing projects on the go including performances that interpret research data on environmental issues to increase awareness of the issues raised in the data. The CAE is also involved with the Lachlan Catchment Management Authority's "Boorowa Experience" project with the Boorowa Primary School. The "Boorowa Experience involves evaluating and documenting the school students' journey as they follow the Lachlan through the catchment; and the proposal he is developing for an environmental awareness centre at Thurgoona.

John has received substantial financial support from the Faculty of Education to further develop his proposal which could eventually lead to a low environmental impact residential camp at Thurgoona of international significance. John says his proposal is also being backed by the Head of Campus and the Institute. "We are in a prime area and it fits in with the University's recent signing of the Talloires Declaration, which is a declaration from universities all around the world in about the role of universities in leading the community in environmental sustainability. We have the potential to make this an international centre of excellence for environmental awareness and management."

John says the centre would be accessible to the community and school and tertiary groups, and form a key component of Thurgoona. "It would be along the lines of a Living Museum of Natural History or Environmental Laboratory," says John. He sees it including things like bush tucker plantings, incorporating the latest technology to monitor native fauna and flora, a natural art gallery leading to an amphitheatre, and provide a base for groups to explore and interact with the Murray and surrounding area.

A steering committee has been formed and John is busy organising some strategic support groups. "We anticipate working closely with the Wirradjuri council because that is essential to its success, that it has a genuine indigenous flavour and support," he says.

# DISCIPLINE GROUP NEWS

## ECONOMICS & REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The ERD group has been working to develop a proposal for the Third Integration theme currently named "Vibrant Rural and Regional Communities". This proposal was sent to ILWS members on Sept 21 for comment and we gratefully received some very thoughtful feedback. We are planning to develop this further in the coming months. Mail out of surveys for the "Understanding landholder constraints to the uptake of market-based instruments and incentives" has begun. Currently over 4200 surveys have been posted out with an initial response rate of over 40%. Yappa Bandara and Hailu Kidane attended the Cotton Production Seminar 6-7th Aug 2007 at Narrabri to help them in their pilot project "Factor Use Efficiency of Australian Cotton Production". Yappa and Hailu have submitted a project proposal to Cotton Australia and will soon be receiving data. Kerry Grigg and Debra Da Silva have been actively working on their project "The Affect of Work/Life Balance Employer Brands on Skilled Internal Migration: A dual-perspective analysis of skills shortages in regional Australia". These members have been heavily featured in the media in regards to this project and we look forward to seeing their results in the future. Funding for the "Comparative Reliability of Rank and Choice Data in Stated Preference Models" project has been confirmed to the value of \$2500 from the University of Alberta. Data collection for this project should be going ahead in the next few months.

### MEETING

Professor Mark Morrison attended a stock take meeting with Bathurst Regional Council on August 16 to discuss and update the council on current projects that are being undertaken by the Economic and Regional Development group. Major points of discussion revolved around Jenny Sappey, Zelma Bone, and Rod Duncan's project "Mapping the Aged Care Industry and Ageing Issues in the Bathurst Region", and Geoff Bamberry's project "Ethnic, Indigenous, and Mainstream Networks amongst Regional and Rural Australia".

### WRITING RETREAT

The ERD group will be hosting a writing retreat at Millamolong Station on Dec 10-12. This retreat will be attended by members of the ERD group and former editor Dr. John Mullen. The annual writing retreat gives attendees the opportunity to prepare journal articles for submission with the support of colleagues and experienced writers.

## HUMAN DIMENSIONS OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

The Human Dimensions research group has numerous projects underway; some of which are mapped out below, but as a group we have been focusing on developing a clear and defined strategic direction. We see our purpose as being to build a strong supportive and collaborative research culture. Individual members are currently in the process of developing individual research plans based on a template developed by HDR members: Digby Race, Catherine Allan, Penny Davidson and Ian Lunt from the Ecology group. In January 2008 the group will have a strategic planning day where the synergies from each individual's research plan are mapped out, group goals articulated and steps forward developed. More specifically members have had some exciting developments. John Rafferty (who has strong links to the Human Dimensions group) has received a \$20K Faculty grant for a business proposal to develop an Environmental Education camp on the Thurgoona campus. Dirk Spennemann has continued his prolific publication output with 3 books, 1 annotated bibliography, 4 journal articles, and 1 conference paper published since August 2007. On Nov 5 he did an interview with ABC radio on the public display of the mummified remains of Egypt's boy pharaoh Tutankhamun.

Kim Alexander, who recently completed a PhD with SES and now works for CSIRO Land and Water has recently attended a conference on the Management of Pig Associated Zoonoses in the Lao PDR where she presented on 'Socioeconomic impact assessments' and 'Monitoring and evaluation methods and approach'. Her current project, funded by Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) is investigating veterinary parasitology and zoonoses disease in swine. This work has the potential to improve life for the poor smallholder farmers in the uplands of Lao PDR. Dr Rosemary Black has recently published her book 'Quality assurance and certification in ecotourism: Ecotourism series, no 5, with co-editor Alice Crabtree. The book considers the important topic of quality control and accreditation in ecotourism. Well done Rosy!

A new project is underway by Jonathon Howard and Rachel O'Brien after their receipt of a \$5000 CSU seed grant. The project: 'Integrating biophysical and social datasets to better target NRM programs' will run for a year and aims to use GIS to integrate social and biophysical datasets in order to determine the most effective policy tool to use in the most effective places in the landscape. They will do this by conducting social surveys at a farm scale on landholder preferences for different types of incentives (e.g., education, grants, covenants, buy outs, etc). They will then overlay the research with existing CSIRO biophysical datasets. The use of GIS in this way is innovative, has widespread potential, and may lead to more effective NRM programs.

## WATER SYSTEMS

Enormous opportunities lie ahead for Prof Shahbaz Khan and the ILWS Water Systems discipline group which has been accredited by CSU as a stand alone research centre to be known as the International Centre of Water for Food Security (from January next year). UNESCO has also recently accredited the Centre under its prestigious International Hydrology Program, which Prof Khan says is the only one in Australia and brings enormous kudos and will be of tremendous benefit to CSU.

Prof Khan last month added to his earlier Eureka Prize win by claiming the Modelling Society of Australia and New Zealand Biennial Medal for Natural Systems. Prof Khan says: "The award is a great recognition of the end user-driven conceptualisation, development and application of innovative complex systems models linking viable production, sustainable environment and real people, to help solve real problems in real catchments."

As a UNESCO Centre, there will be a strong international focus with projects underway in India, Philippines, Pakistan and China and with links to the US and Europe. Prof Khan says: "The focus is on these countries because of population pressures, environmental degradation and food security issues. The accreditation by UNESCO will attract more students, make CSU very competitive against other universities and give the Centre access to scientists from across the globe. It will open up new areas of research which link back with the water situation in Australia and will help build capacity and provide opportunities for CSU students and researchers. International students will be attracted to come to CSU because the Murrumbidgee Basin is a world reference catchment and this creates a lot of excitement. Researchers from other discipline groups in ILWS will also be needed to strengthen the projects and contribute their skills."

The immediate challenges are to find more office space and up to 15 more staff to work on the range of projects Prof Khan has underway. He says a joint CSU/CSIRO project for the NSW Dept of Water and Environment worth \$4 million is to be delivered in one year. Prof Khan has recently won a \$1.2 million project with Coleambally Irrigation and the National Water Commission and a further \$900,000 with the NWC looking into a standardised way of irrigation efficiency using remote sensing. He says he is also working on a water use efficiency initiative with Lachlan CMA worth \$500,000.

The Murrumbidgee Basin and the work of Prof Khan's team was recently the subject of a documentary aired on ABC's Asia-Pacific Focus. Visit the Centre's new website at <http://www.icwater.org/>

-Kate Roberts

## ECOLOGY & BIODIVERSITY

On Wednesday 31 October, the five discipline group leaders caught up in Young, with one of the main items of discussion being the role of discipline group leader. We had a wide ranging discussion about the role, how it varies between the groups and the challenges we face. It caused me to reflect on my experiences as leader of the Ecology and Biodiversity Group, and explore the way this group functions and interacts with the wider ILWS membership. The Ecology and Biodiversity group predates the overall institute, coming into being in 2005 to facilitate greater interaction between ecologists within CSU. Of the twelve biologists and four spatial scientists, the group contains eight senior researchers with well developed programmes and eight early career researchers, four of whom conducted their PhD research at CSU.

As the leader of this group since its organic inception, my role has been one of facilitation and coordination rather than direction, with all decisions being made by the group as a whole. Chief among these is how to disburse the funds designated to the discipline group and, to-date, we have decided to use these to assist members and PhD students to participate in national and international conferences. While the \$1,000 travel grants don't cover all expenses, it has encouraged members to discuss their research and interact with their extra-mural colleagues while boosting exposure to the institute generally. Given the balance between established and emerging researchers, a great deal of mentoring occurs within the group, bridging gaps between the three campuses and many specializations represented. The number of collaborative research projects within the group has increased greatly since the group was formed, including the two integrative projects across the overall institute that are led by EBG members. *-Dave Watson*

## WORKSHOP

The Ecology and biodiversity group funded ten ILWS staff and students to attend a two-day Bayesian Statistics workshop on Oct 4 & 5 at the University of Melbourne. Attendees included Dave Watson, Rachel O'Brien, Alison Matthews, Andrea Wilson, Alison Skinner, Laurence Barea, Nicole McCasker, David Roshier, Robyn Whipp and Elisa Tack.

## INTEGRATION PROGRAMS

### DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

Members of the integration program 'Demographic change in rural Australia' met on October 18<sup>th</sup> at Thurgoona to discuss future progress and listen to presentations by staff on work already being undertaken. Gary Luck gave a short presentation on his attendance at a recent training workshop at ANU on research integration. Colin Boylan, Digby Race, Ian Lunt, Emily Mendham, Allan Curtis, Jo Millar and Jonathon Howard gave presentations on work they are doing that is related to demographic change. The group discussed plans for next year and supported the idea of developing a large project open to all group members based on the theme of the inter-relationships between climate change, demographic change and land management.

The first step in this process is to pull together current information from the various disciplines and write a synthesis paper outlining key questions for future research. This would lead into a major grant application. To facilitate this process, four discipline coordinators were appointed who are responsible for collating the relevant information from their discipline. These are Dirk Spennemann (culture, history), Angela Ragusa (social), Eddie Oczkowski (economics) and Ian Lunt (ecology). Rik Thwaites and Gary Luck will be the overall coordinators. The aim is for this group to hold regular meetings to facilitate interdisciplinary interaction and development of the research agenda, while continually liaising with other group members in the relevant disciplines. The other major issue discussed was the possibility of holding a scientific meeting and

public forum at the end of 2008. Gary Luck will liaise with Kate Roberts and Roni McDowell on developing this idea.

The aim will be to publish the proceedings of this meeting in a peer-reviewed format (e.g. edited book). The next major meeting of the integration program is planned for February/March 2008.

## ENVIRONMENTAL ASSETS

A two day workshop held at Beechworth in August gave the members of the Institute's Sustainable management of environmental assets integration group plenty of opportunities to meet each other, share ideas, and brainstorm future projects. Outcomes of the event, which was held at the La Trobe University campus at Beechworth, included a book proposal and a project proposal. The proposed book, which will be about Australian river management, will be edited by Assoc Prof Robyn Watts (who leads this integration program), Prof Allan Curtis and Prof Kath Bowmer. "This book will bring together existing knowledge from a range of disciplines on management of river ecosystems in Australia," said Robyn.

The project proposal that came out of the workshop was on 'Building resilience into stressed floodplains' was discussed at the Institute's advisory board in September. "At present decisions about where to deliver water onto floodplains and wetlands is haphazard," said Robyn. "Several research organisations (including CSU) have studied aspects of these eco-systems. However the different sources of information from different disciplines and on different taxa have not been integrated and the CMAs have expressed a need for a mechanism to integrate the diversity of available information to help make decisions about where to deliver water."

The workshop included a dinner where participants were addressed



by Advisory Board member Cathy McGowan who encouraged ILWS members to plan and think 150 years from now. Her address was followed by presentations by Penny Davidson, Angela Ragusa, Rod Duncan, Sylvia Zukowski, and Rachel O'Brien.

## VISITORS



It is great to see visitors like Laura McMullen, (pictured here with Dr Paul Humphries) a 24 year old PhD student from Oregon State University, U.S. visit the University's Thurgoona campus to work with one of ILWS' principal researchers Dr Paul Humphries. Laura, who was in Australia to attend the River Symposium in Brisbane, is in her second

year of a PhD in zoology looking at the effects of changes in flow regimes on aquatic invertebrates (creatures like insects, crustaceans, dragon and may fly larvae and beetles).

Her research is part of a larger project looking at experimental releases of water or 'floods' to see what impacts this has on the environment. Laura was at CSU for three weeks, during which time she sampled aquatic invertebrates from macrophyte beds at a site on the Broken River. "I took the opportunity to broaden my understanding of different river systems that have similar issues on different continents," said Laura. While here, Laura was able to use the lab facilities, got to meet other PhD students, and gave a presentation on her research.

# AWARDS & APPOINTMENTS

Congratulations to two ILWS members who have received Carrick awards

- **Dr Rik Thwaites** (Albury-Wodonga Campus) - for sustained excellence in student learning through the establishment, development and delivery of integrated subjects in the emergent discipline of eco-tourism
- Dr John Harper, Dr Roger Mandel, **Dr Geoffrey Burrows**, and Ms Marion Addinsall (Wagga Wagga Campus) - for excellence in team teaching providing a constructivist approach that motivates students from diverse backgrounds to learn botany in a challenging, supportive environment.

Congratulations to **Prof Shahbaz Khan** whose team took out the 2007 Land & Water Australia Eureka Prize for Water Research and Innovation and who has won the Modelling Society of Australia and NZ Biennial Medal for Natural Systems.

**Prof Margaret Alston** has been appointed by the Federal Government as Australia's non-government representative to the 2008 meeting of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. She will be a member of the Australian delegation for the 52<sup>nd</sup> session of the Commission, to be held in the UN headquarters in New York from Feb 25 to March 7 2008.

**Colin Boylan** has been awarded Life Membership of the Society for the Provision of Education in Rural Australia (SPERRA) at the 2007 conference held in Perth WA in of August. Colin's long term contribution to the executive of SPERRA, his role in establishing the fully refereed journal Education in Rural Australia, and his work as a member of Conference convening committees over the past 10 years were mentioned in the oration delivered by Past President and Life Member Sheila King.

Congratulations to:

- **Mark Morrison** who has been promoted to the position of professor
- **Gary Luck** and **Ian Lunt**, who have been promoted to associate professors
- **Catherine Allan** who has been promoted to senior lecturer
- **A/Prof David Watson, A/Prof Ian Lunt, A/Prof Gary Luck, Dr David Roshier** and **Dr Peter Spooner** who have won this year's Faculty of Science Team Award for Research Excellence,
- **Dr Andrea Wilson** who won the Faculty's teaching excellence award.

**Dr Digby Race** has been awarded a Visiting Erskine Fellowship by the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand (valued at \$15,000). Digby will use the Fellowship to contribute to teaching and research related to community forestry at the University's School of Forestry during July-August 2008.

**Prof Allan Curtis** has been appointed to the expert panel for the Murray-Darling Basin Commission's Social and Economic Reference Panel who will provide expert advice to the Commission about research opportunities and about the social and economic impacts of water reform.

Farewell to research officer **Martin Asmus** who has taken up a new job as senior fisheries technician with NSW DPI Fisheries at Narrandera. Martin had been with CSU for 12 years, initially as a technical officer in the Morrell Laboratories at Wagga. He did his honours on Murray crayfish and more recently worked with Dave Watson and David Roshier on mistletoe and ducks.

## OVERSEAS STUDENTS

A warm welcome to two new students Bugi Sumirat (pictured right) from Indonesia and Viengxay Phothakoun from Laos who commenced MPhil post-graduate research at Thurgoona in August. Bugi's (principal supervisor Dr Digby Race, co-supervisor Jo Millar) topic is: "The capacity of farmer forest groups to benefit from commercial forestry in Indonesia". Viengxay's (principal supervisor Dr Jo Millar and co-supervisor Dr Digby Race) topic is: "Evaluation of Capacity Building for Livestock Extension in Laos". Both students are working as part of larger research teams on two ACIAR-funded projects.



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