Hi-tech dating
The art of finding love in cyberspace

Blame it on the brain
Scientists reveal why weight gain follows dieting

Protecting whales and dolphins
Murdoch researchers attracting worldwide attention

Clues to climate change
Hidden canyons are key to climate change

In the Northern Territory tiny water beetles are providing early signs of how climate change impacts on wetlands.

From the Vice Chancellor

Equity and social justice are an intrinsic part of the Murdoch University culture.

As a result we have a longstanding commitment to making university education more accessible to improve the moral as well as economic fabric of Australia.

The importance of this is now being recognised by the Federal Government, with the development of a more socially inclusive agenda as a core component of its higher education platform.

For more than 30 years Murdoch has welcomed a broad spectrum of students – one that includes those with near-perfect TER scores but also many students who are the first in their family to attend university, who come from a low socioeconomic status background or are educationally disadvantaged.

This tradition continues today with programs such as the Lighthouse Project to develop pathways into careers in nursing for Indigenous students.

There are also two-way programs to help the transition to university and into work for African refugees.

These initiatives reflect an emerging social trend of a more inclusive approach to building Australia’s human capital.

Murdoch has long understood that such change will best be achieved through engaging with and valuing the wider Murdoch community.

Our activities are underpinned by a desire to maintain, build or open a dialogue with students, staff, government and business.

At the heart of many of these relationships are our alumni. We look to our alumni to help us continue to build the social fabric and engage in lifelong learning.

I encourage those of you who are able to participate in programs that help link Murdoch and its students to the community.

Perhaps you are willing to help our current students to be work ready through individual mentoring or by facilitating placements for Work Integrated Learning.

With your help Murdoch University is continuing to play an important role as a catalyst for change.

Professor John Yovich AM
Vice Chancellor
inside

Connecting
The latest news from peers around the world. Here you’ll also find the closest alumni chapter to your home.

Murdoch news
If you haven’t visited Murdoch recently here’s your chance to catch up on what’s happening at your university and how to get involved.

Marketing to medics
Murdoch researchers have found that actively marketed antidepressant drugs are being used more often than similar, but less expensive drugs.

Hi-tech dating
More singles are giving up the search for their soulmate at the local bar and choosing instead to let their fingers do the walking online.

Protecting whales and dolphins
Murdoch researchers are attracting worldwide attention as they strive to protect whales and dolphins.

Blame it on the brain
Ever wondered why the weight creeps back on after months of dieting and exercise? Finally scientists have the answer.

Helping Indian rockbreakers
Murdoch chiropractic students travelled to a remote part of India to treat rockbreakers as young as two.

Postcard from Bali
Honours student Jodie Goodman volunteered in the Island of the Gods, immersing herself in the culture while gaining dream field experience.

The first part of this year saw Alumni, Careers and Employment Centre (ACE) host many events.

First off the rank was our April 1 Careers Fair, an enormous success with over 80 employers and more students and alumni attending than ever before. See our report on page 4.

Singapore alumni were delighted to attend our free movie event in April and a well-received Careers Seminar in July.

The Murdoch Vet School Alumni came together in May for a fun-filled open house which allowed old schoolmates to catch up and even participate in cowpat lotto!

The Power of Networking event with special guest speaker John Cluer, CEO of the Australia-Israel Chamber of Commerce (WA) was a fantastic opportunity for our Murdoch Business School Alumni to learn how being part of informal networks operating in every community can assist their careers.

ACE was also thrilled to host an afternoon of wine and literary conversation with renowned author Robert Drew for our Sydney members in July.

With lots more events planned in WA and overseas we know there’ll be something for everyone.

Due to popular demand we have extended the number of our after hours Wednesday Alumni Careers Workshops.

If you’d like to improve your resume, work on your interview techniques or brush up your selection criteria skills, register for one of our workshops by visiting our CareerConnect website at: https://careerconnect.murdoch.edu.au

The Alumni shop has an exciting new range of Murdoch memorabilia now instore or online for your convenience. It’s a great place to buy gifts for friends and family or a lovely memento for yourself.

Check out: http://ace.murdoch.edu.au/ordering

Congratulations and welcome to all our new alumni who will attend their graduation ceremonies in September and October.

Finally, 2008 is officially our Year of Finding Lost Alumni! So make sure your contact details are up-to-date and if you have old Murdoch buddies, please invite them to get back in touch with us.

It’s easy to update contact details online at: http://ace.murdoch.edu.au/forms/changeofdetails.html or simply phone us on (61) 8 9360 6668 or email: alumni@murdoch.edu.au

Vanessa Fernandez-Kennedy
Manager, Alumni, Careers and Employment
From Murdoch to moviemaker

Murdoch alumnus Julius Avery (Bachelor of Arts Media Studies 2001) is setting the scene for a promising career as a moviemaker.

The 29-year-old filmmaker was the recipient of the prestigious Jury Prize for his short film, Jerrycan, at the 61st Cannes Film Festival.

Taking its inspiration from Mr Avery’s early years growing up in the hills suburb of Helena Valley, the award winning 13-minute drama, which was filmed in rural Victoria, is about a group of bored, restless rural teens.

The central character Nathan risks everything after being bullied into making a life and death decision.

Mr Avery described Jerrycan as his most daring investigation into filmmaking.

“We used tight shots and utilised a spontaneous shooting technique to capture those smaller moments where the characters betray themselves and give us the little gems necessary to make a powerful story,” he said.

The Jury Prize, the second highest award in Cannes for short films, adds to a list of accolades for the talented filmmaker.

In 2006 he won the Emerging Filmmaker Award at the 2006 Melbourne International Film Festival and was winner of the Australian Directors Guild Award for best direction in a student film for End of Town in 2007.

Mr Avery, who currently has three feature films in development, attended the Victorian College of Arts after leaving Murdoch.

Career Fair was a big success

Murdoch University’s 2008 Careers Fair attracted over 80 employers from a broad range of industry sectors.

The focus of the April 1 fair was on graduate recruitment, but many alumni also attended.

The event provided students with a great opportunity to meet employers, find out what these organisations seek in their staff and gain a better understanding of each company’s ethos.

Murdoch’s Careers Centre is also offering a new round of opportunities for student interaction with employers through its new initiative Vac-Prac Tuesdays.

Vac-Prac Tuesdays present a great opportunity for students who are seeking a summer job, an internship or volunteer work.

To learn more about the days, which provide an excellent opportunity for relationship-building with potential employers, visit:

https://careerconnect.murdoch.edu.au
International banking career success

A degree in accounting formed the foundations for Donna Chang’s highly successful career in international finance and banking.

Head of Private Banking for ECM Libra Investment Bank Berhad in Malaysia, she is now leveraging her extensive career experience in global treasury investment products to set up an investment advisory unit.

After graduating from Murdoch in 1991 (Bachelor of Commerce) Ms Chang returned to Malaysia to join Hong Leong Finance as a dealer.

Her career has seen her trading various financial instruments, supervising a team of junior dealers and working as senior manager of an investors client group.

In 2006 Ms Chang found herself in the international finance centre in Hong Leong Markets, Hong Kong where she was Head of Treasury Sales.

Her role included covering corporate and private clients in the global investment arena and promoting Malaysia as a destination for foreign investment.

Donna Chang is Head of Private Banking for ECM Libra Investment Bank Berhad.

MBA leads to solutions

Central Asia Resources Limited Managing Director Jason Stirbinskis credits his MBA with equipping him with the ability to successfully work across a number of disciplines and industries.

After an early professional life as a geologist, he completed an MBA in 1994, before joining the banking and finance sectors with roles that included head of BankWest’s Project Centre, consulting to Deutsche Bank, MLHSBC and St George Bank.

He returned to the mining industry to become general manager of METS, an engineering company specialising in metallurgical consulting and greenfield feasibility studies for junior miners.

Mr Stirbinskis, who has been among the honours list in the 40 under 40 awards, is also a guest lecturer for Murdoch’s MBA program.

Jason Stirbinskis, Managing Director of Central Asia Resources Limited.

He said Murdoch’s practically focused MBA had given him the ability to confidently dissect and solve a problem, articulate a solution and then implement it.

The Murdoch University MBA also offered the flexibility to combine study with his work commitments.

“I value face-to-face learning and team assignments and so correspondence courses were not a consideration.”

Setting records

WA’s Under Treasurer Tim Marney has been setting records since graduating from Murdoch University with a first-class honours degree in economics in 1990. When Mr Marney joined the WA Department of Treasury and Finance aged 26 in 1993, he was the youngest person appointed to the State’s senior executive.

In 2005 and at the tender age of just 35 he was appointed Under Treasurer. In this year’s 40 under 40 awards hosted by the Western Australian Business News, Mr Marney achieved runner-up in the First Among Equals category.

Bridging the gap

Alumnus Ezra Hefter (Bachelor of Law and Bachelor of Science (Chem) (Ext. Metallurgy)) has been appointed Executive Director of Ernst & Young. Ezra, who completed law and science degrees at Murdoch in 2001, rose to the position within just six years. Ezra said his multidisciplinary studies provided excellent background for his role at Ernst & Young in supporting scientists with commercialising their work. “Our role involves drawing on knowledge in both the sciences and law. My Murdoch degrees help me bridge the gap between the commercial world and the research and development field,” Ezra said.

Creating green gold

Murdoch alumna and metallurgist Silvia Black may well have found a way of extracting “green gold.” Dr Black (Extractive Metallurgy PhD 2007) researched alternative methods of extracting gold rather than the traditional use of cyanide. She found the use of thioultmate more environmentally-friendly and cost-effective. Dr Black, whose PhD was sponsored in conjunction with Murdoch University and the Parker Centre (CRC for Integrated Hydrometallurgy Solutions), earned the Parker Centre award in November 2007 for the best PhD submitted in 2006-2007.

Guiding others

Organisational psychologist Roger Tan plays a key role in sharing Singapore’s experience in public governance with management and government officials from other countries. Mr Tan is a director of Singapore’s Civil Service College International (Bachelor of Arts First Class Honours 1991) which provides training programs and consulting services to regional and international organisations. Mr Tan, who was awarded a Singapore Government scholarship to study at Murdoch University, is a winner of the University Medal for best academic performance.
Exploring the truth

A love of writing, as well as the opportunity to reveal the truth to the public, continues to inspire Eng Hock in his work as a journalist for Malaysia’s leading English daily newspaper. Eng, an international student with a Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communications, (Public Relations 2005) regularly covers politics and public affairs in his work for The Star Newspaper.

Striking the right chord

Elizabeth Lindsay has inherited the ability to strike the right chord wherever she visits. The popular Collie music teacher (First class honours in Politics, Philosophy and Sociology, 1996) hails from a long line of musically talented people. Her adult children, Andrew and David, are also accomplished flute and trombone players. Ms Lindsay, who teaches singing and piano to both adults and children in Collie, has been awarded a Murdoch University Research Studentship to assist with her PhD research for a thesis on multiculturalism and identity.

Digging up the past

Murdoch alumnus Jack Makilroy (Bachelor of Arts, Hons, Social and Political Theory 1978) has spent most of his working life as an archaeologist, spending many years at California’s Anthropological Studies Centre at Sonoma State University. His work has taken him all over the world but he is now back in Australia after working on a dig at Fremantle’s Pioneer Park where lots of early buildings are buried. Jack’s findings will be used to inspire future designs for upgrading Pioneer Park and the Phillimore Street Precinct.

Movie screening in Singapore

More than 100 Singaporean Murdoch alumni turned up at the Golden Village Cinema on May 17 to catch a free movie screening of the blockbuster Ironman specially organised by the Alumni, Careers & Employment Office. The movie, free popcorn and soft drinks were well received by the alumni who brought their family and friends to the event.

Vet open day

Antarctic photography, a wonky donkey and cutting edge technology were features of the Veterinary and Biomedical Sciences Open House in May. The state-of-the-art facilities and world-class veterinary school were shown to alumni, veterinary colleagues, families and friends and members of the Murdoch Veterinary Trust. It revealed a proud history of the Vet Science Program and gave a taste of future veterinary education at Murdoch.

Connecting

Treading the boards

Thespiian and Murdoch alumna Gemma Northover has scooped the title of best actress for her performance in Blak Yak Theatre’s Picasso’s Women.

The NIDA graduate, who completed her Murdoch University degree (Bachelor of Arts Mass Communications) in 2002, received the accolade at the Independent Theatre Association’s Finley Award—the community theatre equivalent of the Tonys.

Ms Northover, 26, has had a guest role in TV’s All Saints and also appeared in her first professional theatre role in July in the Perth Theatre Company’s Speed—the—plow.

Ms Northover said her Murdoch degree had given her a great foundation for all her roles.

“I gained really solid skills in writing and research and this helped a lot with my NIDA course which is also an academic degree,” she said.

Boosting crop yields

Murdoch alumnus Dr Derek Goto is seeking a solution to an agricultural problem which causes significant losses of crop yields worldwide.

Dr Goto (Bachelor of Science (Hons) 1997) has an independent laboratory in the Creative Research Initiative Sousei at Hokkaido University, Japan.

His research team is investigating how parasitic root-knot nematodes interact with plant cells at the molecular level.

Root-knot nematodes are small worms that invade the root systems of plants and rob them of nutrients, making them more susceptible to disease and causing significantly lower crop yields.

Agriculturalists have long struggled to control these nematode infections because their ability to live completely inside the plant’s roots system means the infected plant cannot be treated unless its roots are destroyed.

Dr Goto’s research team is seeking insight into how the nematode reprograms plant cells during the early stage of infection to develop safer control strategies.

In a rare appointment for an Australian, Dr Goto gained a five-year tenure track position from December 2007 to operate the independent laboratory.

Dr Goto, who was known as Derek Bartlem before taking his wife’s surname, obtained his Masters degree from Hokkaido University in 1999 and his PhD in 2002.

His research path then took him to the globally-renowned Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory in the United States where he worked under the guidance of Professor Rob Martienssen.

He also found himself rubbing shoulders with many of the world’s leading scientists including Jim Watson, the geneticist who received the 1962 Nobel Prize for unravelling DNA structure with Francis Crick.

To learn more about Dr Goto’s research visit: http://gotolab.cris.hokudai.ac.jp
New bio frontiers

Biotechnology sciences alumnus Gerard Chew (right) looks back on his time at Murdoch University as the first step in a journey that gave him the impetus to “think out of the box.”

After finishing his degree (Bachelor of Science (Hons) Veterinary Biology) in 1994, Mr Chew returned to Singapore and immediately started tackling new business frontiers.

He set up BioMed Diagnostics – a then one-man business selling biomedical products.

The company sells medical supplies, research tools, laboratory equipment and diagnostic products to healthcare institutions, life science researchers and clinical laboratories.

Like many entrepreneurs Mr Chew found the early days a “little scary”, however fuelled with the good fortune of entering the market when life sciences became a “buzzword”, he soon began to achieve success.

Today, the company has nearly 100 employees in Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand and there are plans for further expansion in Indonesia and Vietnam.

Biomed Diagnostics was earlier this year named one of Singapore’s top 100 small and medium-sized enterprises in a Standard Chartered – Dun & Bradstreet Top 100 SMEs Award.

Mr Chew said studying at Murdoch had given him the tools to “really start thinking out of the box.”

Tourism prize honour

Commercial tourism operators around Western Australia’s vast state are proving to be just as passionate about protecting the environment as those appointed to protect it.

This is one of the findings of award-winning PhD research by Murdoch alumna Dr Aggie Wegner.

Dr Wegner’s research explored working relationships between protected area managers and commercial tourism operators, earning her the prestigious Sir Frank Moore Award for Excellence from Queensland’s Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre (STCRC).

Dr Wegner said her field research, which took her to the Kimberley, the Mid-West and South-West, found tour operators just as passionate about preserving the environment as gatekeepers.

“I’m really keen to do further work towards building lasting relationship bridges between the two groups,” Dr Wegner (above) said.

“It’s so important for sustaining the environment.”

STCRC, Australia’s leading scientific tourism research organisation, introduced the Sir Frank Moore Award to recognise and reward excellence in PhD research and to assist in promoting research to industry.

The award, named in honour of retiring tourism industry visionary Sir Frank Moore, included a $5000 cheque to help advance Dr Wegner’s science career.

Dr Wegner completed a BSC Environmental Science (Hons) at Murdoch in 2001 and finished her PhD in 2007.
Student village expands among pines

To deal with an increase in demand for on-campus accommodation, Murdoch University is expanding the student village.

Deputy Vice Chancellor (Faculty, Enterprise and International) Professor Gary Martin said accommodation requests had increased in line with student numbers rising from 2007 to 2008.

“We have approved plans by the village property manager, Campus Living Villages, to provide another 298 beds by the start of first semester in 2009,” Professor Martin said.

The construction of additional facilities has already begun and by completion the village will offer a total of 836 beds.

“By the time the expansion is complete, the student village will be among the best on-campus accommodation in Australia, featuring an e-library, café and swimming pool for residents,” Professor Martin said.

“Sixty existing flats will also be refurbished with new carpet, paint and furniture.”

Campus Living Villages has contracted EMCO to build the extension.

Election to the Senate

Interested Murdoch graduates are encouraged to nominate for election to the Senate, the University’s governing body, for a three-year term commencing January 1, 2009.

Membership of Senate involves attending six Senate meetings a year and membership of a Senate committee.

All graduates and diplomats of the University (except those who are current Murdoch University student or staff members) are eligible to nominate. If you want to nominate, or to register to vote in the election, you must do so by 4pm on Monday, October 6, 2008.

Please send your nomination and/or vote registration to:

Mail: Careers & Alumni Centre,
Facsimile: (08) 9310 2676
Email: J.Exeter@murdoch.edu.au

Ballot papers will be issued at the end of October to those who have registered to vote, with voting closing on Monday, November 3, 2008.

For further details, please contact the Alumni Officer, Jan Exeter on (08) 9360 6144.

Agents familiarise with Murdoch

Each year Murdoch International invites a group of recruitment agents to Perth to participate in a week of activities and learn more about Murdoch, its programs and facilities.

This year 15 agents from 12 different countries, including Saudi Arabia, Germany, India, Singapore, Taiwan, China, Pakistan, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Thailand, the US and Australia visited.

Feedback from agents was overwhelmingly positive and agents returned home able to more effectively communicate information about Murdoch to prospective overseas students.
Multi-storey apartment buildings better for Perth

Dr Brad Pettitt, Head of the School of Sustainability at Murdoch University, believes multi-storey apartment buildings are a better idea than subdividing big blocks.

Dr Pettitt has been involved in implementing Network City, a strategic framework for guiding Perth and Peel to a sustainable future. It looks at management strategies to meet the challenges of climate change, water, oil and resource depletion while catering for the demands of rapid population growth driven by a strong economy and increased affluence.

“There’s a real need to examine how we can do things differently,” Dr Pettitt said.

He said there were often poor development outcomes from trying to get urban consolidation solely from subdividing people’s backyards.

“The classic Nedlands example is when you have a 700 square metre block which is divided into two blocks of 350 square metres each. The result is two small blocks likely to be covered in oversized McMansions but in which the density is still not great enough to allow for quality public transport or for good social amenity. All it does is take over the green spaces within suburbs.

“Those suburbs still remain car dependent and the houses being built are often quite big and very power and water hungry.

“It’s only been the last 10 years that we’ve really started to rethink how we’ve been designing our suburbs so it’s not necessarily around the car and people having their own block of land. It’s clear that this old model is not working and not creating sustainability in terms of environmental outcomes or sustainability in terms of social outcomes.

“I believe it’s better, if people are going to be in the suburbs in stand-alone housing, for them to have decent sized blocks. But we also need to offer residents a larger array of medium to high density housing options that would include four, five, six, 10 storey apartments. These should be of a high quality and located in all suburbs near key transport and shopping nodes.

“Enabling that choice of housing type is one of the real strengths of the Network City planning – a radical rethinking of how we’ve done things in the past.”

The Murdoch perspective on the 2020 Summit

Murdoch’s Chair of South-East Asian Studies, Professor David Hill, and outgoing Deputy Chancellor Alison Gaines were selected for the gathering of the nation’s best and brightest minds at the 2020 Summit in Canberra in April.

Professor Hill participated in the panel Australia’s Future Security and Prosperity in a Rapidly Changing Region and World.

He said his panel’s 38-page Summit report recommended the need to reinvigorate and deepen engagement with Asia and the Pacific, and ensure that our region’s major languages and cultures were no longer foreign to Australians but mainstreamed into society.

A campaign to develop regional literacy was also given high priority.

Ms Gaines joined the Summit’s 100-strong Governance Group, which dealt with issues including the republic, overhauling the federation, improving public accountability of government and strengthening citizen’s participation in governance.

Her ‘big idea’ for the Summit was that all 18-year-old citizens be automatically enrolled on the election roll, avoiding attempts to use the closure of the roll prior to election to disenfranchise youth voters.

The man who made the strongest impression on many attending the Summit was Maurie Japarta Ryan, the grandson of Vincent Lingiari.

Deputy Chancellor Gaines said it was fitting that Hugh Jackman and Ted Wilkes sang the Paul Kelly song, From Little Things, Big Things Grow - the story of the Wave Hill strike led by Lingiari.

“It was a reminder that people of conscience can shape their world,” Deputy Chancellor Gaines said.
New frontiers overseas

Murdoch University launched two new international study centres in 2008, one in Dubai and the other in Singapore.

Professor Gary Martin, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Faculty, Enterprise and International) said that the new centres were a key part of enhancing Murdoch’s position as one of Australia’s leading global universities.

The Dubai International Study Centre, within Dubai Academic City, will operate in partnership with the Global Institute Middle East which will provide infrastructure, teaching and administration facilities.

“Global Institute Middle East will provide students with access to media studios, computer laboratories, a library, resource areas and a dedicated teaching and learning area,” Professor Martin said.

Bachelor degrees in Media, Mass Communication, Commerce, Marketing and the Media and an MBA are now available.

The opening of the Singapore International Study Centre builds on Murdoch’s partnership with the Singapore Manufacturing Federation’s (SMa) School of Management.

“The Study Centre, which was previously SMa branded and hosted various international universities, is now solely dedicated to Murdoch University courses,” Professor Martin said.

Murdoch’s partnership with SMa has grown from 22 students studying two majors in the Bachelor of Commerce in 2004 to over 1000 students studying in eight undergraduate and postgraduate degree courses. Murdoch plans to increase the number of students studying at the Centre to 1800 by the end of 2009.

The Singapore Study Centre spans six floors of prime city space and includes a dozen classrooms, a computer lab and a newsroom for journalism students. It is also conveniently located opposite the Singapore National Library.

Alumni can look good for less.

South St campus hair salon, Hairress, offers alumni members and Postgraduate students a 10% discount off any hairdressing service.

**Introductory offer:**
Receive a free styling product valued at approximately $18.95 with any colour and cut until 31 December 2008.

Call the salon on 9360 6497 to book an appointment.

**Hairress:**
Upstairs, Sport & Recreation Centre
Car Park 4
Murdoch University Campus
South Street Murdoch
www.hairess.com.au
Marketing to medics

Sophisticated marketing techniques used by pharmaceutical companies to market drugs to doctors could ultimately backfire, according to Murdoch University Senior Marketing Lecturer Dr Steven Ward.

New research by Dr Ward has found that antidepressant drugs actively marketed to GPs and psychiatrists in Australia were then more commonly prescribed than similar, less-marketed alternatives, even if those alternatives were cheaper.

"Drug companies are regarded as the second most trusted source of information for doctors and these companies need to make sure they’re not only acting within the law but are being responsible," he said, "or they risk losing that position of trust and will no longer be regarded as reputable sources of information."

Dr Ward said that while direct marketing of drugs to the public was banned in Australia, pharmaceutical companies were spending $21,000 per Australian doctor each year marketing drugs directly to medics.

His research shows that while these marketing dollars appeared, in the short term, to be money well spent, the insidious nature of some of the marketing could ultimately damage the reputation of drug companies as trusted sources of information.

"The techniques these companies use to market these drugs are so sophisticated that it’s been suggested doctors may need training to recognise when they are being marketed to," he said.

"The results of my research surprised me because psychiatrists, who have more training in mental illness and in medications for mental illness, were found to be even more likely than GPs to be influenced by branding."

The study found that drug companies often provided many incentives to prescribe a particular brand of medication.

"This may include support of educational seminars, conferences and trips, use of free samples and extensive sales promotion."

Dr Ward added there was an argument for disclosure by doctors to patients of how much marketing they’d been exposed to when prescribing a drug.

"Doctors are already required to outline the risks and benefits of a treatment to patients - they should also be required to tell their patients of any inducements or benefits they’ve received from the drug company, such as whether they’ve been to any drug company-sponsored conferences, receive free samples or if they’ve ever done paid research for the company.

"It should be along the lines of the disclosure obligations for financial planners, if they get gifts and inducements they have to declare them, and I think the same should apply to doctors.

"In America, where direct marketing of drugs to the public is allowed, there’s a lot more oversight by the FDA, which is a strong regulatory body that can and does move very quickly with strong interventions when it believes drug companies are out of line.

"There needs to be similarly strong regulatory powers here. Our system allows marketing to doctors to fly under the radar in terms of regulation."

Dr Ward said the marketing of antidepressant medications also had the potential to cause massive blowouts in the cost of healthcare.

"The prescription system is based on patients being prescribed the cheapest drug that helps cure the ailment - if we have a situation where people are getting drugs that aren’t very different, but are more expensive, then that threatens the system."

By Denice Rice
Hi-tech dating

Meeting a potential partner in cyberspace may still seem the stuff of movies, but in reality more people are going online to date, Wendy Pryer reports.

Research conducted by Murdoch University Mass Communication Lecturer Dr Sharon Delmege provides a fascinating insight into internet dating.

Dr Delmege said that more than 50 per cent of singles in the United States use internet dating sites and there’s been a huge increase in their popularity in the 10 years they’ve been available in Australia.

She said that with 92 per cent of Australians having access to a computer at home, many people chose to search for a potential partner online from the comfort of their own homes instead of across a crowded bar.

“Today we’re time poor, more likely to live on our own, be better educated, have more money and work longer hours, have fewer kids, marry later and have higher rates of divorce or separation, but we still want a partner,” Dr Delmege said.

This was in line with research conducted in Toronto of 500 internet daters, of which 75 per cent went online to find a partner.
"Most of the participants said that if you’re not into pubs, then it’s hard to meet someone," Dr Delmege said.

Along with colleagues Dr Kirsty Best and Dr Beth Pingelly, Dr Delmege conducted focus groups with 14 users of internet dating websites, or mediated relationship portals, on which her research paper is based.

Participants in this small study were aged from 18 to early 60s and were mostly tertiary educated. About half were single but all had been in previous relationships – about half of the group had been previously married.

Some internet dating sites charge a fee for membership, but all require members to display their own profile before they can access other members.

Dr Delmege said users liked the anonymity of searching for a potential partner online. She said it was quite private because people chose an alias, and their profile didn’t include personal information.

Members can sift through hundreds of profiles but categories such as sex, age, distance, ethnicity, education, occupation, religion, politics, star sign, smoking and drinking habits as well as physical characteristics help users filter or reduce the number of profiles viewed.

Dr Delmege said it was interesting to look at what filters participants actually used to narrow down the field in search of a potential dating partner.

Age and proximity were key filters, but just as in the real world, looks mattered. Members can choose to include photos or videos and whether to make them visible or password protected, but most participants said they tended not to look at profiles that didn’t have a photo displayed.

"The photos and profiles are taken very seriously," Dr Delmege said.

"Users look for clues such as clothing, spelling and what people reveal about themselves, as well as looking for key phrases such as, recently separated:"

Interestingly, the more experienced a person becomes at using internet dating sites, the more open-minded they become about what they are looking for in a partner because going through the process helps them understand what they’re looking for.

Honesty was of paramount importance to all users studied, said Dr Delmege, although all participants admitted telling at least one lie about themselves, usually about their age, in order to be included within someone else’s filters.

So does online dating work?

According to Dr Delmege, all users wanted to meet someone face-to-face. They didn’t spend months online chatting to someone they were interested in without following through in the real world.

"Everyone agreed that while you might have all the boxes ticked online, that first meeting in person (or discussion on the telephone) was the most important thing," she said.

"There’s an awful lot of filtering that goes on before that first date, but it was still the clincher as to whether or not they were attracted to the person.

"One couple in the study met online and have just returned from their honeymoon and everyone said they’d made at least one friend through internet dating:"

As with everything involving the internet, there will always be privacy and safety concerns. However those concerns belonged to the friends and families of the users interviewed in this study – users felt completely safe and hadn’t experienced any security concerns.

"Basically most of the users felt their safety could be more at risk in a pub," Dr Delmege said.

"By the time they actually meet someone they want to date, there’s the same risk as going out on any date:"

While some participants felt there was a stigma associated with using internet dating sites to find a mate, they were open about their own use with at least some friends and family.

She said all participants found their internet dating experience positive and had become more socially confident as a result and this translated into other areas of life.

Writing about themselves had helped them think about their values and who they were, and the experience of meeting people helped them clarify what they wanted from a relationship.
Online success

When Melanie and Mark Griffiths met through an internet dating site, oddly enough it wasn’t a relationship they had in mind.

These popular sites, used by up to half of all singles in the US, are not only the place of romance but friendship as well. Melanie was already dating someone she’d met online when she stumbled across Kalgoorlie-based Mark on the site she already had made several friends through.

During her single years, Melanie said she often met up “in the real world” with single like-minded friends she’d met online. After a month-long holiday overseas, Melanie returned to Perth and her then relationship ended. She continued her online friendship with Mark and they finally met in person.

A month later Mark moved to Perth and they haven’t looked back since – the friendship founded on many common interests soon blossomed. In June this year, the couple took the next step and married.

Melanie admits she found internet dating sites a little daunting to begin with but said waiting in a pub for Mr Right to come along wasn’t the answer either. Melanie tried that for a while but said it was difficult to even get a conversation going with a stranger in that environment.

Pubs weren’t the place for Mark either. When his 27-year marriage ended in 2006, the non-drinker tried pubs a few times but found the anonymity and ease of internet dating a much better option.

“If you’re going to use these sites you have to be honest – Melanie and I never lied to each other,” Mark said.

“After some experience, you can tell from a person’s online, demeanour what it is they want.

“The best thing (about internet dating) is that you can decide how much information you want to put out there. If you feel uncomfortable about any situation online you can just block the other person’s access.”
Whale and dolphin research attracts attention

Led by Dr Lars Bejder, the Bunbury-based unit is working on several groundbreaking studies. Much of the research is designed around understanding how human activities, including fishing, recreational boating, tourism and industrial port development all impact upon cetaceans.

The researchers’ ultimate goal is conservation of these protected species and the environments they inhabit through sustainable development of our coastline.

The research unit has a number of students and staff working on a diverse range of projects on whale and dolphin conservation issues from the Pilbara to the south coast of WA.

These projects include assessing dolphin abundance, habitat use and prey dynamics around Bunbury, preventing accidental dolphin deaths in the fishing industry in the Pilbara, and understanding the behaviour of dolphins in Shark Bay that use sponges while foraging.

Dr Bejder’s earlier research found that dolphins deserted areas of high tour boat activity and had lower rates of reproduction than those dolphins living in areas with low tourism.

Murdoch University’s Cetacean Research Unit, within the Centre for Fish and Fisheries Research, is less than three years old but already attracting international attention for its innovative research into whales and dolphins.

By Jane Hammond.
These alarming findings prompted a review of the way dolphin and whale watching operations were managed in WA, with a more sustainable approach now being adopted in similar circumstances the world over.

Earlier this year, Murdoch hosted a workshop of the International Whaling Commission for 40 of the world’s leading cetacean scientists. The purpose of the meeting was to design a worldwide experiment to evaluate the impacts of whale and dolphin watching on targeted cetacean populations.

The fact that the Murdoch Cetacean Research Unit hosted such a high powered meeting was a pat on the back for an organisation established a mere two years earlier.

Another two major international scientific meetings are in the pipeline for Perth in the next few years as a direct result of the unit’s work and increasing international profile.

“One of our very strong areas of research is evaluating the effects of human activity on coastal dolphins,” Dr Bejder said.

The unit is also working with Murdoch’s Veterinary School to understand reasons for dolphin deaths. A tissue bank is being built to study contaminant levels in dolphins in different areas of the coast.

“Dolphins are very high in the food chain and can act as bioaccumulators for a variety of toxins,” said Dr Bejder.

“Thus, dolphins might be considered good indicators of ecosystem health. We will investigate whether there are different contaminant levels found in dolphins from industrial areas compared with dolphins from pristine areas.

“The results of this program will give us a picture of the health of these environments.”

Dr Bejder said samples would be taken using lightweight darts that take small samples of skin and blubber from wild dolphins. The technique is already being used by the team in a separate study to assess population structure and gene flow between different dolphin communities.

Dr Bejder said the research unit had developed useful collaborations with other institutions, such as the University of New South Wales and Curtin University, and researchers around the world.

“We now have three Adjunct Professors, including one based at the University of Zurich in Switzerland and two others based in Denmark,” Dr Bejder said.

“By working with other universities, industries, conservation groups and government agencies, we’re able to achieve positive outcomes in cetacean conservation.”

Dr Bejder said WA was unique in that it still has so many areas of pristine coastline, as well as areas heavily modified by human activity.

He said there were plenty of opportunities to gather baseline data on dolphin populations exposed to different levels of human activity.

This allowed the impact of these activities on dolphins and whales and the environments they inhabited to be evaluated and addressed.
Every year about 50 dolphins die in trawl nets in the northern waters off WA’s coast. This occurs when dolphins are accidentally caught in trawl nets and are unable to reach the surface to breathe. They’re part of a “bycatch” of several threatened species taken as boats trawl the ocean for fish to feed demand for seafood from the Perth and eastern states markets.

Dolphins dive and play with the nets, gorging on fish and using the trawlers as sources of easy food. Most manage to swim out of the nets as they’re pulled up – but in one in every 100 trawls, a dolphin stays too long in a net and is caught.

The fishing industry, working with scientists from the Department of Fisheries, has managed to significantly reduce the number of deaths by redesigning the nets, but the state and federal governments want to see numbers reduced even further.

Simon Allen, from Murdoch’s Cetacean Research Unit, within the Centre for Fish and Fisheries Research, is working collaboratively with the Pilbara fish trawl industry and the WA Department of Fisheries to help solve the problem.

A seasoned whale and dolphin researcher, Mr Allen is working with the industry to make nets more dolphin-friendly.

Modified nets feature special escape hatches that turtles and sharks have used to effect. But because the hatches are fitted at the bottom of the nets, they’ve been less successful in allowing dolphins to escape.

Most dolphins, when panicked, will swim up towards the surface, missing escape hatches at the bottom of the nets.

The combined expertise of Centre and Unit researchers is working toward refining the nets to make them safer for dolphins, turtles and other threatened species.

The research project is known as “Reducing dolphin bycatch in the Pilbara trawl fishery” and is funded by the industry, state and federal governments through the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation.

Mr Allen is working closely with a professional netmaker, Hughie McKenna from Tasmania, to develop and test different net designs. He’s also using video footage of dolphin behaviour around trawl nets to develop a prototype that will help save the lives of many dolphins and other threatened species.

It’s hoped that, once developed, the redesigned nets will be used to help reduce the dolphin bycatch not only in Western Australia but worldwide.
Hidden canyons are key to climate change

Research by Murdoch scientist Jenny Davis into ancient water ‘pennies’ living in hidden canyons south-west of Alice Springs could hold a key to understanding early ecosystem responses to climate change, reports Jane Hammond.

Associate Professor Davis from the School of Environmental Science has been studying the lifecycle of these tiny aquatic water beetles and their slater-like larval form for more than 20 years.

She says the beetles are a relic from a time when Australia was a much wetter place.

Their survival in arid Australia and ability to hang on while other species have succumbed to drought, fire and human-induced environmental changes gives the beetles special value for scientists.

“Their survival against the odds means they have a certain robustness and it’s this combined with their vulnerability to a drying climate that makes them potential sentinels for climate change,” says Professor Davis.

She said that by studying the water pennies scientists should be able to see early signs of how climate change is impacting on arid zone wetlands.

For the past century, since the beetles were first recorded in the ranges, they’ve remained virtually untouched.

They have survived in groundwater-fed streams, within shaded gorges, high in the central ranges away from the impact of feral animals, development and other activities.

Protected by Watarrka National Park and sheer remoteness, the beetles have remained much as they were 18,000 years ago when inland Australia looked very different to the landscape we see today.

Professor Davis said the beetles would have dispersed through the ranges along the waterways of the once mighty Finke River thousands of years ago.

Closely related species are commonly found in fast-flowing streams of good quality water along the Great Divide from Tasmania to Cape York. They live among relic ferns and water plants that have also survived since the last wet phase in central Australia.

With indications that climatic changes may be occurring more quickly than earlier projections, monitoring the beetles and watching for signs that their habitat is expanding or retracting will give scientists a picture of how climatic change is affecting inland Australia.

“Climatologists can tell us whether the climate is drying, but the beetles will tell
New centre is working to save WA’s unique biodiversity

Western Australia’s forests are under extreme stress and climate change is to blame.

New and endemic fungal diseases are killing our native trees at a rate not previously seen.

Marri, peppermint, tuart, wandoo and red-flowering gum forests are all suffering a range of diseases believed to be exacerbated by the impact of climate change.

The blight comes on top of the already damaging effects of dieback on the state’s jarrah forests.

Researchers at the new State Centre of Excellence on Climate Change and Woodland and Forest Health, based at Murdoch, are working against the clock to save what remains of the South-West’s valuable forest ecosystems.

Interim Director Associate Professor Giles Hardy said the Centre, which opened in July, is focusing on limiting the impact of climate change on woodland and forest ecosystems.

“Everything we do at the Centre is concerned with climate change,” Professor Hardy said.

“We have in the South-West one of the world’s top 25 biodiversity hotspots and we have to do something to save the ecosystem for generations of children to come.

“There are a lot of things we can do to manage the impact of climate change.”

Professor Hardy said large areas of the popular Yalgorup National Park south of Perth were already dead.

The Centre brings together scientists and researchers with a range of skills to work on ways to halt the impact of climate change and manage forest ecosystems to adapt to the rapid rate of change.

It has collaborative links with other universities and organisations around the world and will work closely with scientists from the University of WA and Department of Environment and Conservation.

The State Government has already allocated $2.3 million to help fund the Centre for the next five years.
Blame it on the brain

For years, dieters in pursuit of the ideal body weight have been plagued by a phenomenon which seems to make a permanent reduction in kilos an extremely difficult achievement. Now scientists have found the reason why – it’s wired into our brains, reports Kristen Watts.

While the art of improving nutrition and increasing activity is something many dieters seem to be able to master and therefore gain the desired result, maintaining a lower weight seems to be a much trickier business.

In fact, the problem of losing weight and gaining it again is so common that it has been dubbed the yo-yo effect.

Working out how to combat the issue for each individual is not always a simple process because after months of restricted eating, many people naturally want to return to a relatively normal diet after reaching a goal weight – but doing so often results in disaster.

Murdoch University researcher David Miller, in collaboration with scientists in Scotland, has discovered a mechanism which is probably responsible for the phenomenon.

Dr Miller said his research had looked at the brains of sheep during and after dieting and discovered that the appetite control centre in the brain has a virtual default setting that is responsible for maintaining body weight.

The default setting seemed to be locked in after the animal had been at a given weight for a set period of time. Any relatively brief fluctuations were adjusted according to the default setting.
So if the animal was overweight for a period of time long enough to create a default setting, any increases or decreases in weight would be hard to sustain unless they were prolonged to reset the brain again.

Dr Miller said sheep were a good model to use as an indicator for what happened in humans because the mechanisms responsible for changes in weight were similar.

He said that in the animal model, it appeared weight changes needed to be sustained for about four weeks before the brain reset the default setting to the new weight.

“For a long time, people have been baffled as to why it is that overweight individuals have a hard time maintaining weight loss after dieting,” he said.

“They seem to continually feel hungry and that results in them putting weight back on and then losing it again and putting it all back on – otherwise known as the yo-yo effect.

“And now the reason for this seems to be that the appetite centre in the brain wants to maintain weight at a fixed level, and defends this against any fluctuation.

“When we looked at sheep we were studying the neurochemical pathways in the brain that form part of the information system that the brain uses to determine an increase or loss in appetite.”

He said there was an over-abundance of appetite-stimulating signals in previously overweight animals that had lost weight compared with an animal that had not experienced weight loss.

“Basically we found that if we had animals which maintained a high level of body fat, their brain reset to think that was an appropriate body weight,” Dr Miller said.

“So what happens is that whenever an overweight animal loses weight, it tries to reset to its starting weight.”

The crucial finding was that it took about a month for the brain to reset once weight had changed and then steadied.

This implied there was no point dieting to reach a target weight without implementing a strategy to help the individual stay at that weight for at least a month.

After the individual had maintained their desired weight for a month, cravings for food would probably subside, Dr Miller said.

“Obviously, the next stage for us in this research is to see if we can replicate it in humans,” he said.

“I suspect that in sheep, the system is more simple because eating is purely a physiological drive, but in humans it’s so much more complicated.

“In humans, hunger is made up of physiological signals and psychological signals which means there’s not just a need involved.

“If we smell something nice or see something nice like chocolate, it can trigger a desire for that food when the brain is not necessarily telling us we need to eat.”

Dr Miller said that while more work was needed before the finding could result in widespread weight loss for overweight people, it could go some way to explaining why obesity was becoming increasingly prevalent.

He said there was a chance that our brains had not evolved to compensate for a constant abundance of food, unlike centuries ago when food supply was not assured.

The brain was probably originally programmed to make use of times of abundance by increasing appetite while the food was available. Fat reserves in the body would later be utilised when food was not plentiful. During times of food scarcity, appetite would also still be stimulated to encourage more hunting and gathering activities. This would probably explain why we are not that good at losing weight but very good at putting it on. Humans are now said to be maladapted to modern society because food is always abundant.

He said even though the research needed to be further developed, parts of it could already be applied to eating patterns to possibly induce better results for dieters.

“We can incorporate what we know into a dieting strategy so that once you establish a target weight, the key is to make sure you maintain that weight for a number of weeks or months,” he said.

But the future held more promising applications for the findings. Dr Miller said there was a chance the research could lead to the development of a drug that could be used to help people through the difficult times of frequent cravings following weight loss.

The idea would be that by reducing the effect of appetite-stimulating signals from the brain for at least as long as it took to reset the default weight setting, maintaining the goal weight would be more achievable.

“The main problem is that the process is quite intricate and complex and by manipulating one facet, it’s likely we will affect a whole range of other processes in the body,” he said.

The speed at which further research progresses depends on funding, but Dr Miller was hopeful that the government and drug companies would be interested in supporting the research, obviously in the hope of developing useful therapies in the fight against the global obesity epidemic.
For the third year in a row, dedicated students in Murdoch University’s School of Chiropractic and Sports Science have raised money to cover the costs of a fly-in chiropractic clinic to aid remote northern Indian villagers. Twenty five students have just returned from their two-week life-changing journey to help communities in Siliguri, West Bengal, where children as young as two break rocks for a living alongside other family members who earn a pittance selling rubble to building contractors.

The annual chiropractic trip to India began in 2006 with the efforts of former Murdoch student Brett Dellar, who now has his own practice in Carnarvon.

Brett was looking to organise a project for fellow students to sharpen their clinical skills while providing healthcare to a community in need when he stumbled across the Seva Kendra Mission, along the riverbanks surrounding Siliguri.

Together with Father James Gonsalves, the director of Seva Kendra who works with these impoverished communities every day, Brett organised a crew of 28 Australians – four doctors and 24 Murdoch interns – to run chiropractic camps for these stonecrushers.

Over 400 people attended the camps, presenting with all sorts of ailments from cuts and bruises to fever and backache.

Studying at Murdoch University not only provides you with a quality education but can also connect you with doors that open up to exciting experiences in other parts of the world.

Helping Indian rockbreakers

By Wendy Pryer
The chiropractic clinics are now eagerly awaited in Siliguri with villagers looking forward to the once-a-year visit from Perth students.

Professor Brian Nook, Dean of Murdoch’s School of Chiropractic and Sports Science, oversaw preparations for this year’s trip which also involved five qualified chiropractors and a paramedic.

Andrew Treloar, 26, a fourth-year student, was one of several helping to organise this year’s trip.

He said it had been awe-inspiring, rewarding and exhausting; providing invaluable experience as well as much-needed help for the villagers who lived in appalling conditions.

“The trip was at times overwhelming and surreal, with students presented with cases rarely seen in Australia,” he said.

“While the work was also very arduous, with students physically setting up the clinics and equipment and treating patients well into the night to help as many as possible in just 10 days, it was also amazing.

“To see the immediate relief experienced by patients, many with such bad back injuries that they couldn’t walk properly and were in constant pain, was hugely rewarding.”

Mr Treloar estimated that about 500 patients were treated during this year’s visit, with some needing treatment for up to two hours.

The intense humidity and monsoonal rains were other factors students had to adjust to during their stay.

Mr Treloar said students were now able to diagnose cases with much greater proficiency and treat cases much more efficiently than they had before the trip.

He said most of the people living in the communities around the riverbanks of Siliguri were illegal immigrants from Bangladesh who had moved across the border over the past 30 years.

“Unfortunately they’re still classed as illegal immigrants despite many families having lived there for more than a generation, and no efforts have been made to relocate them.

“This means these people don’t have access to government education or healthcare.”

Leprosy, malnutrition and other health problems linked to inadequate food and water were rife, he said.

The students had been amazed at how happy and positive the villagers were, particularly the children.

Until their visit to Siliguri, the chiropractic team had not been aware that drug abuse was also a problem in the communities.

In addition to providing chiropractic care, Murdoch students raised the money needed for Seva Kendra to run an environmental program to help improve hygiene and sanitary conditions in the communities, including the removal of rubbish and the provision of toilets in schools.
Postcard from the Island of the Gods

An AUSaid placement in the Island of the Gods has been a dream field experience for honours student (Bachelor of Arts Community Development and Asian Studies 2007) Jodie Goodman.

"Friendly people, colourful ceremonies and an exotic landscape have been part of the rich fabric of my daily life during my five-month Volunteering for International Development from Australia placement.

The AUSaid-funded VIDA program is similar to the Australian Youth Ambassador Program but is open to people of all ages. During my placement I conducted field research for my thesis on NGOs (Non Government Organisations) in Indonesia.

I worked with WKP, a Balinese Women’s Development NGO specialising in micro-enterprise development, after gaining an introduction from my honours supervisor Carol Warren.

I facilitated training workshops, wrote a training manual and reports, and conducted focus groups in a mountain agricultural village.

While I have previously spent time studying in Yogyakarta I had only ever been to Bali on short holidays up until this trip.

It’s been so rewarding to live in such a vibrant culture. There’s a ceremony almost every week.

I’ve met some beautiful people, improved my Bahasa language skills and sampled some of the most delicious food on the planet.

I was lucky enough to find a house near the beach at Sanur.

I spent my time off at the beach or scooting around on my bike exploring the small villages and beautiful coastline. I was also there during the United Nations Climate Change Conference and I took part in some colourful street parades.

I’m not really sure what lies ahead of me now. After my honours thesis I may pursue further Indonesian-focused research.

Or who knows, maybe another VIDA placement?

I definitely recommend the program to other students who may be looking to combine study with practical work experience.*