Helping the grain industry grow

Government backs flagship grain innovation centre at Murdoch - Page 3
Reforms could drive single parents into poverty

Research conducted by Murdoch University and the University of Western Australia (UWA) has shown single parents are more likely to experience poverty as a result of major reforms to the child support system and parenting benefits.

Associate Professor Lisa Young, from Murdoch’s School of Law, said the impact of the reforms on single parents had not been properly examined.

“One of the key goals of the child support system was to reduce the likelihood of children experiencing poverty. One would have thought that, when introducing the reforms, their combined effect on single parents would be considered,” she said.

“However, no modelling was done and even now, reports that emerge discussing the impacts of the reforms fail to address the issue of the combined effect of these changes.”

The researchers developed a model to assess the impact of the changes on single parents affected by both sets of reforms.

“The findings indicate that single parents are more likely to experience poverty after the reforms than was previously the case as their disposable income may decrease dramatically if they meet the minimum workforce participation requirement of 15 hours, introduced under Welfare to Work,” Associate Professor Young said.

“Only those single parents with at least average earnings are better off. At low levels of income, single parents are worse off under the reforms, and this loss peaks around $22,000 income.”

“This is particularly concerning because this is the sort of income level one would expect from a single parent doing low paid unskilled work during school hours.”

Associate Professor Young said it was unlikely that the changes would encourage single parents into the workforce.

“Research indicates that single mothers want to work, but often other barriers restrict their engagement in full-time work,” she said.

“These reforms do not address any of those barriers, such as the educational and career disadvantages faced by those women for whom family support has been their primary work, a lack of family-friendly arrangements in workplaces, and a shortage of low cost, readily available child care.

“The danger is that, rather than providing the support necessary to enable single parents to increase their workforce participation, these changes will drive more single parent families into poverty.”

Associate Professor Young worked with Associate Professor Dr Paul Flatau, from Murdoch Business School and Dr Tracey Summerfield, then at UWA’s School of Law. The research was funded by UWA and Murdoch University.

Causes of the Global Financial Crisis unveiled

Professor Joseph Stiglitz, renowned economist and winner of the 2001 Nobel Prize in Economics, spoke to a capacity crowd in the Kim E Beazley Lecture Theatre in July.

Professor Stiglitz outlined the events that led to the global financial crisis, as discussed in his new book, Freefall: Free markets and the sinking of the global economy.

He said that prior to the collapse of the markets, the US was living in an unsustainable “bubble”.

He said: “Somewhere between two-thirds and three-quarters of our growth was related to real estate. House prices were soaring while the income of most Americans was going down. Almost all the growth was going to very few people at the top. ‘We were consuming beyond our means’.”

Professor Stiglitz said the situation was made worse by a mistaken belief that markets were self-correcting.

“What happened was that government kept saving the market and because it did such a good job the market began to think it was saving itself,” he said.

“The banks that were being bailed out by government had failed in their basic job of assessing creditworthiness. They loaned to people who couldn’t pay. Government bailed them out and that led them to engage in more and more of these bad lending practices.”

Professor Stiglitz said the stimulus packages introduced by governments around the world after the crash did work – particularly the Australian one, which he considered the most effective.

But he said the American stimulus package was not well-designed and was too small.

He added: “There was a big economic and political mistake in leaving those who made the mess in charge.

“Some of the people in charge in the Obama administration were the very ones who pushed extreme deregulation,” he said.

“They wanted to believe that the economy was only going through a temporary bump. The result was a package that was not strong enough and that means that two or three years after the bubble has broken the economy remains weak.”

Professor Stiglitz described the crisis as a “slow train wreck”.

He said: “We had this bubble, and the consequences of that bubble breaking were predictable and predicted. Every bubble breaks and has severe economic consequences. In this case it was an economic and financial meltdown.”

He said there was now a need for an alternative approach that would restore the appropriate balance between markets and government, which had been lost in the run-up to the crisis.

Professor Stiglitz’s visit to Murdoch was secured by Dean of Murdoch Business School Professor Malcolm Tull, who is also WA Branch President of the Economics Society of Australia.

He said: “Professor Stiglitz has an outstanding international reputation for his contribution to economic theory and policy. We were extremely fortunate to have such a distinguished scholar giving a lecture at Murdoch.”
$30 million investment for grain research centre

Plans to bring a state-of-the-art grain innovation centre to Murdoch are progressing well.

The State Government is to invest $30 million over three years towards the creation of the centre, part of a $186 million program to relocate the Department of Agriculture and Food to the Murdoch South Street campus.

The Australian Export Grain Innovation Centre (AEGIC) will be a vibrant hub of science, technology and innovation focussed on increasing the competitiveness of the $4.5 billion Western Australian grains industry.

The AEGIC will comprise four major research, development and enterprise pillars:

• export quality grain;
• crop protection and biosecurity;
• crop productivity under climatic and soil constraints;
• industry productivity and value chain innovation.

Supported by the co-location of about 180 Department of Agriculture and Food staff, the centre will tackle current industry problems and issues and undertake longer-term, strategic analyses to ensure the continued productivity, sustainability and competitiveness of the industry.

The centre will be Western Australia’s flagship contribution to the National Grains Research, Development and Extension Framework. As such, it will play a major role in underpinning and expanding Australia’s $9 billion grains industry, almost half of which is produced in WA.

Vice Chancellor Professor John Yovich said: “More than 80 per cent of Western Australia’s annual grain production is exported each year to countries all over the world. With its strong export focus, the WA grains industry is acutely aware of the need to remain responsive to new technology, productivity improvements and the changing tastes of its international customers.

“It is imperative that research and development efforts are focussed on issues that will make a real and significant difference to the productivity and market value of the Australian grains industry.”

The facility will feature state-of-the-art laboratories and plant growth environments, along with offices and multipurpose conference facilities. These will be supported by a suite of web-accessible tools for the storage, sharing and analysis of information and data generated within the centre and from local and international collaborators.

Battle against deadly fungus

Mehmet Cakir is just one of the Murdoch experts tackling real-life issues affecting the grains industry.

Associate Professor Cakir is heading up a WA State Agricultural Biotechnology Centre study aimed at fighting a deadly wheat fungus that is threatening the world’s wheat crops.

Four new mutations of the devastating fungus known as ‘stem rust’ have overcome existing sources of genetic resistance developed to safeguard wheat crops.

Associate Professor Cakir has been working to develop wheat genes resistant to strains of stem rust – Ug99 – and the Russian wheat aphid in a bid to keep Australian wheat production safe from these biosecurity threats.

According to the Borlaug Global Rust Initiative gathering of the world’s leading wheat experts, the evolving pathogen may pose an even greater threat to global wheat production than the original Ug99.

The new ‘races’ of Ug99 have acquired the ability to defeat two of the most important stem rust-resistant genes, which are widely used in most of the world’s wheat breeding programs.

The new variation of Ug99 identified in Kenya went from first detection in trace amounts in one year to epidemic proportions the next.

First discovered in Uganda in 1999, the original Ug99 has also been found in Kenya, Ethiopia, Sudan, Yemen and Iran. A Global Cereal Rust Monitoring System, housed at the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, suggests it is on the march toward South Asia and beyond.

Its trajectory and evolution are of particular concern to the major wheat-growing areas of Southern and Eastern Africa, the Central Asian Republics, the Caucasus, the Indian subcontinent, South America, North America and Australia.

Associate Professor Mehmet Cakir (right) working in Kenya where up to 80 per cent of wheat has been affected by rust.
Creepy art for Murdoch’s Economics, Commerce and Law building

The striking imagery of prominent Perth based street artist ‘Creepy’, aka Kyle Hughes-Odgers, has given energetic new life to Murdoch University’s main lecture theatre courtyard as part of a dramatic refurbishment project.

Art Collection Curator Mark Stewart said the concept behind the refurbishment was to upgrade facilities and enhance a key traffic and congregation area while adding an important creative component.

“Creepy’s art provides an amazing sense of vitality and vibrancy, something that was lacking in this area,” he said.

“The upgrade has included wireless internet connection, a roof canopy offering weather protection, enhanced lighting and new seating creating an energetic hub for students and the community to congregate, study and meet with fellow students and lecturers.”

In determining a suitable artist to undertake the commission, Mark considered street art for its resonance with the student population.

He said: “Creepy is a major player in Perth’s emerging street art scene, which is high quality and echoes an international renaissance in this genre, originally popularised in the 1980s by American artists such as Keith Haring and Jean-Michel Basquiat and more recently by British artist Banksy.”

“Creepy’s spray painted artwork is youthful and curious with sophisticated imagery while highlighting broader issues central to man’s effect on the environment and one’s life journey.”

Creepy explained that although each of the seven artwork murals told a specific story, they are open to the viewer’s interpretation.

“The largest painting is based on industry and environmental ideals and how they interrelate – separate but entwined. The second largest mural reflects the journey of life and the third is a little more sombre and is based on the idea of time passing – nothing lasting forever,” he said.

“The remaining murals draw on imagery from each of the three larger murals and represent choices made and choices to be made”.

Mr Stewart added: “Recently, Murdoch Art Collection harnessed and redefined its themes and strategies. The inclusion of public art into the campus environment reflects this focus while underpinning the culture and brand of Murdoch and our communities.

“This commission is a fantastic way to stimulate and inspire our students’ minds while offering a creative medium from which to further enhance their studies.”

Creepy will showcase his highly anticipated solo exhibition at Turner Galleries in Perth from August 13 to September 11, 2010.
The National Centre of Excellence in Desalination (NCED) at Murdoch University's Rockingham campus has been officially launched with a 'pressing the button' ceremony in July.

The University was awarded $20 million by Australian Government in 2009 to host the National Centre of Excellence in Desalination (NCED), an integral part of the Australian Government’s long-term Water for the Future initiative.

The federal funding over five years was topped up by an extra $3 million from the Western Australian State Government.

The Honourable Gary Gray MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Western and Northern Australia, launched the Centre on behalf of Australian Government Minister for Climate Change, Energy Efficiency and Water, Senator Penny Wong, alongside Murdoch’s Vice Chancellor Professor John Yovich.

The NCED aims to establish an internationally significant research and development destination that helps Australia and the world face future challenges of water security.

Murdoch University, as Administering Organisation of the Centre, has partnered with Australia’s leading water and desalination research institutions to bring together diverse capabilities and resources.

The 12 projects that the NCED Board has approved for the first round of funding were also announced at the launch ceremony.

Professor David Doepel, Murdoch’s Deputy Vice Chancellor Research (Acting), said the recommendations for the Centre’s first $3 million funding round would further generate around $7.1 million of in-kind contributions and $1.5 million in leveraging cash from industry, bringing a total of $11.6 million of research activity to the precinct.

“The NCED’s grant funding supports a range of activities and investments, including scholarships and fellowships, and research and commercialisation pursuits,” said Professor Doepel.

“The funding recommendations are inclusive of all NCED’s participating organisations and span all five research theme areas: pre-treatment; reverse osmosis desalting; novel desalting; concentrate management; and social, economic and environmental issues.”

A second funding round is scheduled to open in September 2010.

EduLab to educate and engage community

One of the first projects of the National Centre for Excellence in Desalination (NCED) will be the creation of an EduLab to educate and engage the community in the science and technology of desalination.

It is part of the NCED’s mission to be more than a pure research and development facility.

Vice Chancellor Professor John Yovich said: “The EduLab must also be a centre that provides effective communication of the research outcomes that will enhance continued learning in this area, as well as support well-informed decision making.

“It will be a place that engages the minds of students, journalists, policy makers and the wider community in water technology.”

NCED’s Chief Scientific Officer David Furukawa, one of the world’s leading experts in desalination, said the idea for the EduLab came out of extensive consultation with industry.

He said: “The EduLab will create a unique space within the main research facility. It will be visitor friendly – but will be much more than a typical visitor centre. It will have an active, public-centred lab where demonstration experiments will mirror the research activity of the centre.”

At the urging of Gary Gray, the local member for Brand who announced the funding of NCED, the EduLab will be designed to accommodate school groups.

Professor Yovich said Mr Gray’s continued advocacy for the development of NCED and its opportunities for links with the community was to be commended.

He said: “The EduLab will be designed to accommodate school groups and will be an important part of local teachers’ toolbox to be able to engage students with the science behind desalination.”

“It will benefit directly from the NCED collaboration of 13 of Australia’s top research institutions and the world-class desalination pilot testing facility at Murdoch University’s Rockingham campus.”

Graeme Rowley appointed NCED Chair

Graeme Rowley, former Executive Director of Operations at Fortescue Metals Group (FMG), has been appointed inaugural Independent Chair of the National Centre of Excellence in Desalination.

Murdoch Vice Chancellor, Professor John Yovich, said Mr Rowley had a strong understanding of the limiting nature of water for the sustainable growth of our natural resource base.

“Mr Rowley’s experience in the resources sector is unparalleled, as is his commitment to the development of inland and regional Australian infrastructure, including water and Indigenous employment opportunities,” he said.

Mr Rowley helped establish FMG with Andrew Forrest, and he continues as a non-executive member of the FMG Board.

Prior to joining FMG in 2003 he worked in a number of senior executive roles for Rio Tinto Ltd, following a distinguished career in the Royal Australian Air Force.

Mr Rowley said the new position represented an opportunity to help develop a world-leading Centre of Excellence of which Australia could be particularly proud.

“Australia is already recognised internationally as a nation that has embraced the use of desalination technology for our own water security,” he said.

“My expectation is that we will also become known as a nation that can successfully develop, apply and commercialise that technology as well.”
Research finds multiple factors led to dolphin deaths

The deaths of six dolphins in the Swan Canning Riverpark last year reflect the stressful nature of the environment they inhabit, according to Murdoch University scientists.

A Murdoch team prepared a technical report for the Swan River Trust to support the Chief Scientist’s investigation into the 2009 deaths, the findings of which were delivered to the Minister for Environment in April.

The 2009 deaths represented a marked increase in mortalities from previously recorded numbers, and occurred in two clusters – three in June 2009 and three in September-October 2009.

Co-author Dr Carly Holyoake, also Murdoch’s Marine Mammal Health Project Coordinator, said post-mortem examinations of four of the dolphins by the University’s multidisciplinary team indicated several factors combined to result in the deaths of the dolphins.

“One dolphin was found to have died following complications associated with fishing line entanglement,” Dr Holyoake explained.

“Another dolphin had a fungal infection of the brain and two dolphins died as the result of severe skin lesions initially caused by a virus called cetacean poxvirus or tattoo skin disease.”

Dr Holyoake said the dolphins affected by the virus were the most intriguing.

“It’s the first time that dolphin poxvirus has been confirmed in Western Australia,” she said.

“This virus, which affects only dolphins and porpoises, usually only causes mild skin lesions in infected dolphins. It is highly unusual that the skin lesions observed in the two dolphins progressed to such a severe state.

“We suspect that the severity of the skin lesions observed is a result of the dolphins being compromised by a combination of many factors associated with living in an estuarine environment.”

The factors likely to have contributed to the dolphin deaths include:

- environmental factors such as salinity and temperature fluctuations
- infectious disease, for example poxvirus
- contaminants
- human stressors such as fishing line entanglements, noise, boat traffic
- an overall “stressful” environment combining all of the above, and also changing landscape – with increasing pressures associated with an expanding population.

Director of Murdoch’s Centre for Fish and Fisheries Research, Professor Neil Loneragan, said these contributing factors are likely to get worse if no action is taken, given the projected human population growth forecasts for Perth and also for other South West cities, including Mandurah and Bunbury.

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“Therefore, the health of dolphins is vital. The fishing industry have been working with us to reduce the number of dolphin deaths – but the state and federal governments would like to see the numbers reduced even further.”

In their final report to FRDC, Mr Allen and Professor Loneragan recommend further research to determine the size of dolphin populations that are impacted by trawl fishing. They also recommend more independent observations of bycatch numbers as dolphin deaths are under-reported.

Mr Allen and his colleagues will now investigate the genetic structure and abundance of dolphin populations of northwestern Australia. This will allow researchers to assess whether the dolphin populations can survive the current levels of mortality caused by trawl fishing. The Australian Marine Mammal Centre funds this ongoing research.
Funding Fitzroy freshwater fish

A Murdoch University program to track endangered sawfish in the Fitzroy River has been awarded an extra $10,000 in funding.

The Natural Resource Management funding is part of the Government's $2 billion investment in Australia’s environment and will extend the sawfish tagging program currently undertaken by local Yiriman (Nyikina/Mangala) rangers, which aims to increase knowledge of the threatened species.

Senior Research Leader Dr David Morgan from Murdoch’s Freshwater Fish Group said the money would pay for more acoustic receivers, used to pick up corresponding acoustic tags placed on fish caught by local ranger groups involved in the program.

“Basically, when one of the fish swims by the receiver it transmits data which we then collect and collate,” he said.

“The tags tell us about the movement patterns and depth utilisation of the fish.”

In collaboration with the rangers, Dr Morgan and postgraduate research student Jeff Whitty had previously tagged 25 fish with the acoustic tags.

The funding will allow for another 10 sawfish to be tagged. The project will also move upstream to the Fitzroy Crossing region and involve local people in tagging fish in Geikie Gorge.

Dr Morgan said sawfish were also tagged with cattle tags and released, with recreational anglers who inadvertently caught the fish asked to report catches to the centre.

He said Fitzroy River freshwater sawfish were important because populations in South East Asia and the east coast of Australia had become extinct.

The fish are believed to spend the first four to five years of their life in the river before moving out to sea. They can live to more than 40 years old and grow to more than 7m long.

Help needed to strengthen WA’s mussels

Carter’s Freshwater Mussel (Westralunio carteri), the only mussel known to inhabit freshwater of South-west Western Australia, is in serious decline.

Murdoch researcher Michael Klunzinger is literally wading in to examine the problem and is seeking community support to help spot mussel populations.

“The mussel is under threat mainly from salinisation of WA’s freshwater systems, making them too salty for the mussel to survive,” Mr Klunzinger said.

“We are hoping the community will help us map where the mussel is found throughout the South-West through the Mussel Watch Western Australia website.

“We already have some community involvement from landowners and government personnel in various catchments, including the Lechenault, Geocatch, western Blackwood, Peel-Harvey, Ellen-Brockman and Swan River systems – but we could use a lot more input from others.”

Mr Klunzinger’s PhD research at the Fish Health Unit, Centre for Fish and Fisheries Research, is part of the state-funded project for Natural Resource Management, Protecting and restoring freshwater ecosystem health in the Serpentine River: an adaptive management approach.

The study is being done in collaboration with Lowlands Conservation Association, Serpentine River Group and Serpentine Jarrahdale Shire and is being supported by the South East Regional Centre for Urban Landcare.

The key areas of focus are biodiversity of native freshwater mussels and fish, biosecurity to detect and eradicate feral fish and improving water quality.

Mr Klunzinger said in addition to salinity, other impacts included pollution, drought, temperature change and the loss of native fish that are necessary to the mussel’s life cycle.

“Larval mussels attach themselves to native fish to spread their population and later develop into juvenile mussels so the declining number of native fish in WA’s south-west undoubtedly has an impact on the mussel’s lifecycle,” he explained.

Historically the mussel was an important food source for Indigenous peoples but today the Department of Health recommends people should not eat freshwater mussels because of their tendency to accumulate contaminants.

The mussel also improves water clarity and quality by filtering tiny particles like plankton, algae and microorganisms.

To learn more visit www.musselwatchwa.com

$440,000 for unmanned aerial marine mammal research

The Australian Government has awarded $440,000 to a strategic marine mammal research project to be done by Murdoch University marine scientist Dr Amanda Hodgson.

The three-year Bill Dawbin Postdoctoral Fellowship was announced by Environment Protection Minister Peter Garrett in June.

Mr Garrett said the Australian Government was committed to continuing the fight for the long lasting protection of whales.

“The projects funded by the Australian Government will utilise the most powerful non-lethal research techniques to build our scientific knowledge of whales and dolphins, not only in our backyard but across the Pacific and Indian Oceans,” he said.

Dr Hodgson’s project will use innovative methods and technology to monitor marine mammal abundance, distribution and habitat use, including miniature remotely controlled aircraft equipped with cameras and sensors to conduct unmanned aerial marine mammal surveys.

Her project aligns with the current research of Murdoch’s Cetacean Research group within the Centre for Fish and Fisheries Research.

“Dr Hodgson’s cutting edge research will be investigating whether this new technology can improve current manned aerial survey methods by eliminating human risk, increasing accuracy of detection, location and identification of species, and enabling surveys in remote regions where manned surveys are impossible,” Mr Garrett said.

“Projects like these demonstrate once again that in the 21st century we no longer need to kill these magnificent creatures to learn more about them.”
**THE MURDOCH UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY MAGAZINE**

**MBS takes the classroom to Europe**

Twenty-two Murdoch University students spent three weeks in Europe during mid-semester break, developing the skills that will help them be a success in the global marketplace.

The unique study tour was developed by Patricia Fulcher, Associate Dean International of the Murdoch Business School (MBS). It aims to give students the confidence and practical skills to be able to cope if working or travelling overseas on business.

"It is becoming increasingly important that employees have staff who travel internationally and can hit the ground running once they arrive, so I developed this study tour with the aim of creating graduates who can both travel and work confidently internationally," Mrs Fulcher said.

"Global competence is not necessarily about speaking the language.

"It is about respecting cultural sensitivities while still getting the job done.

"This study tour differs from the majority because it allows for in depth immersion over a short stay study tour period."

Students travelled through three countries spending time in Barcelona, Rome and Dubrovnik.

In each city they immersed themselves in the culture through carefully planned and guided tours and saw university life from a different perspective by visiting other universities. They also visited a variety of businesses in Perth before they departed and similar businesses overseas so that they could compare the operational differences.

The International Study Tour will run each year over the mid year winter term and is open to any Murdoch student from any course area.

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**Prestigious award for China-based alumni**

A Beijing-based Murdoch University graduate has become one of only nine recipients of an award that acknowledges the successes of Australian university alumni based in China.

Ms Wang Yijia, who received an MBA from Murdoch in 1998, won an Australia China Alumni Association (ACAA) and CPA Australia Alumni Award. She is the Vice President and Chief Financial Officer of China Life Asset Management Company where she is responsible for overseeing USD $3.2 billion in assets.

Murdoch University Faculty Dean Law and Business, Chris Doepel, was among the 250 guests attending the awards in Shanghai on July 10 where Ms Yijia received the ANZ Bank – ACAA Award for Banking and Finance.

"Murdoch University is honoured to see Wang Yijia receive the award," Mr Doepel said.

"Her Murdoch MBA has clearly provided her with a firm foundation for business success. We wish her well in her future career."

Ms Yijia has worked at China Life Asset Management since 2004. The company is part of the China Life Group, and manages assets up to RMB 1400 billion, with 38 per cent market share. It is the largest insurance asset management company in China, and the largest institutional investor in the domestic capital market.

She set up the first Hong Kong subsidiary company owned by a Chinese insurance company, and her company was one of the first to receive approval for investment in foreign countries.

Ms Yijia has helped the company to participate in a public listing project after corporate restructuring and helped to execute financial and tax policies.

Since 2009 Murdoch has been increasing its academic and research collaborations with Chinese institutions, encouraging more Chinese students to come to Murdoch and enhancing opportunities for Australian students to study in China.

Murdoch has formed partnerships with highly ranked education institutions in North, South and East China which is likely to lead to between 250 and 400 Chinese students commencing study at Murdoch over the next two years. Murdoch has also signed a sister agreement with Zhejiang University of Technology allowing their students to study at Murdoch.

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The Murdoch Children's Performance Group has taken its latest production to Asia. The group staged performances of The Phoenix and the Fighting Pandas of Yunnan Province at venues in Malaysia. They also ran a number of workshops.

The multi-media, theatrical experience incorporated puppetry, lavish costumes, original music and a script which blended physical theatre with an appealing storyline. It was written and directed by Associate Professor Jenny de Reuck, head of the Children's Performance Group at Murdoch's School of Social Sciences and Humanities.

"The production and workshops are designed as an educational resource," said Professor de Reuck.

"Twelve schools will take part in the mentoring model from the beginning of 2011."

She said students would be better able to develop a sense of belonging to a particular school, and see the changes in a school and its students, over a year.

She added that it was important to build strong relationships between schools and universities to produce confident graduate teachers.

"Student teachers will reap the benefits of having in-school workshops and tutorials, observing and participating in a variety of teaching strategies and working in the school's focus areas — an advantage of being at one school, and growing with that school, rather than changing between schools for short-term placements."

"Schools will also benefit from the students trained in the School of Education's various specialist courses, including the Bachelor of Education/Australian Indigenous Studies, Bachelor of Education/Early Childhood and the Bachelor of Education/Inclusive Education."

"On the flipside to that, student teachers will benefit from school specialists in Studies of Society and Environment and Science, Physical Education/Health, the Arts, Numeracy and Literacy — the year timeframe allows for our students to really develop themselves alongside these specialists in addition to their classroom mentor teacher and other school staff."

Murdoch Partnership flags have been raised at participating schools to show the community the school's ongoing association with the University.

Teaching through theatre overseas

The Murdoch Children’s Performance Group has taken its latest production to Asia.

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"The production and workshops are designed as an educational resource," said Professor de Reuck.

"The troupe had already performed to over 2000 primary school children through the sell-out season in Perth before the international tour."

"As with all our productions, we sought not merely to entertain, but to educate as well in the true spirit of Theatre in Education."

The overseas productions were held in conjunction with the hosting facilities — The Temple of Fine Arts International Malaysia — Johor Bahru and The Temple of Fine Arts International Malaysia — Kuala Lumpur.

The tour was part of the University’s launch of a new major in Theatre and Drama, beginning in 2011 in the School of Social Sciences and Humanities.

"We're looking to establish an international relationship with Malaysia's Temple of Fine Arts and we will be offering an intensive two week unit in Kuala Lumpur from 2011 as part of an intercultural initiative for theatre and drama students at Murdoch," Professor de Reuck said.
Help for farmers

A new interactive website aimed at helping farmers get the best value from their crops is being trialled by a group of farmers in Western Australia’s wheatbelt shire of Corrigin.

Developed by Murdoch’s Centre for Comparative Genomics (CCG) team, the Farm Improvement Web (FIWeb) portal will bring together the masses of farm-level data collected both nationally and locally.

Professor Matthew Bellgard, Director of the CCG, said: “At the moment this information is not used properly because it is either too hard to access or it’s too complex and not presented in a way that meets the grower requirements.”

It is hoped farmers and agronomists will use it to share environmental, soil moisture and soil nutrition information at the paddock level alongside pre-existing national databases.

Fighting climate change

Professor Richard Harper, Murdoch’s Alcoa Chair in Sustainable Water Management, has been appointed as a lead author on agriculture, forestry and other land uses for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s (IPCC) 5th Assessment Report.

The IPCC is the leading body for the assessment of climate change and provides a clear scientific view on the current state of climate change and its potential environmental and socio-economic consequences.

Contributing to student learning

Three Murdoch staff have been awarded prestigious Citations for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning from the Australian Learning and Teaching Council:

Ms Prue Andrus, Nursing and Midwifery – for engaging and preparing nursing students in caring for a critically ill patient during emergency resuscitation simulation exercises;

Ms Linda Butcher, Educational Development – for creative integration of pedagogical and professional media knowledge to produce effective, engaging resources addressing emerging learning and teaching issues;

Dr Martin Cake, Dr Melinda Bell, Dr Teresa Collins and Dr Jennifer Mills, Veterinary Professional Life – for innovation and leadership in the successful integration of Veterinary Professional Life, a whole-of-course intervention enhancing professional attitudes, ethics, communication and life skills.

The Citations, valued at $10,000, are awarded to academic and professional staff who have made long-standing contributions to the quality of student learning and improving the overall student experience.

Vice Chancellor Professor John Yovich said: “We are very proud of the commitment and enthusiasm of our staff, who make an invaluable contribution to student learning.”

Addressing the rural vet shortage

MURDOCH UNIVERSITY IS HOPING TO ENCOURAGE MORE STUDENTS TO TAKE UP RURAL VET POSITIONS BY IMPROVING ITS PRODUCTION ANIMAL TEACHING FACILITIES.

Vet shortages in rural and production animal practices are a problem in Australia, New Zealand and the United States.

Professor Ian Robertson, Acting Dean of Murdoch’s School of Veterinary and Biomedical Sciences, said: “To encourage students to take up careers in rural and production animal practices we need to give them the best production animal experience possible and that means providing the latest state-of-the-art equipment.

“We are refurbishing the sheep and pig facilities to showcase best practice, including the most rigorous animal welfare and human health and safety standards.

“We are also upgrading our reproduction labs to assist in developing of breeding stock and artificial insemination.

“Australia is one of the world’s largest exporters of primary products and this has been achieved through efficient farming practices and freedom from the major diseases affecting animals in many other countries.

“These facilities will help maintain best-practice training of veterinary and animal science students which indirectly contributes to maintaining our valuable export markets.”

The on-campus farm facilities were originally built to state-of-the-art standards in the 1970s, but standards of animal welfare, human health and safety and farm management have greatly evolved over the past 30 years. The number of vet students at Murdoch has also risen from 40 to almost 100 per year.

Alcoa Farmlands, Craig Mostyn Group, Primaries of WA and National Australia Bank have pledged a total of $35,000 to support the refurbishment.

David Lock, CEO, Craig Mostyn Group, said: “As Western Australia’s major pork producer and processor, Craig Mostyn Group and Linley Valley Fresh Park are fully committed to the highest possible standards of animal welfare, quality control, biosecurity, human health and safety across its operations.

“Craig Mostyn Group recognises the importance of training the next generation of veterinarians and animal scientists and therefore is proud to financially support the upgrading of the production animal teaching facilities at Murdoch University.”

The University is seeking additional funding to complete the project.

Murdoch University Veterinary Trust has initiated the Investing in Rural and Production Animal Veterinary Training Fund for contributions to the project. For information about making a donation, contact the Veterinary Trust on (08) 9360 2731.

Murdoch more than 'meats' the challenge

A MURDOCH TEAM HAS WON THIS YEAR’S INTERCOLLEGIATE MEAT JUDGING CONTEST, BEATING AUSTRALIAN AND INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION AT THE EVENT IN ARMIDALE, NEW SOUTH WALES.

The team not only took the Roy McDonald Shield for overall success at the two-day competition, but had four of its eight Animal and Veterinary Science students make the final 15 from 96 competitors from 11 universities – including teams from Japan and the USA.

The contest followed two days of workshops and seminars in which students heard from numerous industry leaders, giving them a true perspective on the Australian and global meat industry.

The Murdoch team were champions in Eating Quality Evaluation and runners-up for Pork Judging, Lamb Judging, Retail Cut and Primal Identification and Questions and Reasons.

They edged out the USA team in the competition for the Roy McDonald shield – the first time in four years an Australian university has managed to bring the shield back to Australia since US teams joined the competition.

The prestigious Roy McDonald Shield has been returned to Australia for the first time in four years thanks to the Murdoch team – image courtesy of Peter Maloney, Australian Agriculture Authority, 2010.
First honorary doctorate awarded in Dubai

His Excellency Sheikh Nahayan bin Mubarak Al Nahayan, United Arab Emirates’ Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, has been awarded an Honorary Doctorate by Murdoch University.

Conferring the Doctorate in Dubai, Chancellor Terry Budge hailed Sheikh Nahayan as a visionary leader who has made, and continues to make, an outstanding contribution to the development of higher education and research in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

“His name and higher education in the UAE are synonymous,” Mr Budge said.

Sheikh Nahayan was also invited to give the first Sir Walter Murdoch Memorial Lecture delivered outside of Australia at the ceremony.

In his lecture, One Human Family, he urged the global community to work together towards global peace and prosperity in unity.

“The dream of most of the world’s people is to have peace, stability, economic security, personal dignity, and a high quality of life,” he said.

“Our challenge today is how to achieve this dream which seems far beyond reach of most of our fellow global citizens."

Professor John Grainger, Pro-Vice Chancellor of Murdoch University Dubai, said: “His Excellency Sheikh Nahayan bin Mubarak Al Nahayan, UAE Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research

Excellency is the undisputed father of education in the country, and his vision for educational excellence in the UAE, and the unswerving dedication to fulfilling that vision, is evident to educators throughout the world.”

Two Murdoch Master of Pharmacy graduates are doing their bit to stem the shortage of pharmacists working in remote and regional Western Australia.

Melody Mugari and Rosie Majid moved from Perth to Broome to work for the Broome Pharmacy Group, which has outlets in Broome city centre, China Town and Cable Beach.

Associate Professor Robert Coltona, Dean of the School of Pharmacy, said there was a real shortage of hospital and community pharmacists in Australia, particularly in remote and regional areas where pharmacists are relied upon for essential services.

“Pharmacists are increasingly consulted as primary health providers, particularly for the treatment of chronic illnesses, because they are so accessible and able to integrate their health knowledge,” he said.

“Turn the computer off at the wall once you’ve finished using it, and turn off the light in the toilet,” she said.

“Learn what can be recycled – for example take the lid off the bottle before you put it in the recycling bin, and leave your car at home one day a week.”

The pilot program, established in 2009, was run in the historic wheatbelt town of York, about 100km east of Perth, where 21 per cent of its population signed up to make changes.

The program was extended across Western Australia this year and next year it will be launched nationally. There are plans to see daysofchange.org go global in 2012.

Murdock’s own launch of daysofchange.org included a No Cars on Campus Day where staff and students were encouraged to choose a more sustainable mode of transport.

Murdock’s Chancellor, Terry Budge, is on the board of the not-for-profit foundation running the program, and Murdoch graduate Julian Ilich is the organisation’s CEO.

Graduates meet needs of regional communities

Alumni Rosie Majid and Melody Mugari are working as pharmacists in Broome

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Days of Change backed by staff and students

MURDOCH IS BACKING A PROGRAM ENCOURAGING INSTITUTIONS AND PEOPLE TO CHANGE THE WAY THEY LIVE IN ORDER TO REDUCE THEIR ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT.

The University has signed on as a partner of daysofchange.org, which encourages individuals and organisations to shape their future by making simple changes to the way they live.

Murdock’s Environmental Program Manager Caroline Minton said as part of the University’s commitment, staff and students were encouraged to go online to www.daysofchange.org and pledge to take action to reduce their impact on the planet.

Caroline said there were four simple things people could do at work and home to make a contribution to change.

“Turn the computer off at the wall once you’ve finished using it, and turn off the light in the toilet,” she said.

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Research award

Murdock University Emeritus Professor Robert Reece has been awarded the Borneo Research Council Medal of Excellence.

The award is in recognition of Professor Reece’s many outstanding contributions to the study of the history of Borneo.

Over three decades he has written extensively on a wide range of topics and has been responsible for locating and preserving extensive private collections of letters, photographs and other materials in Rhodes House Library, Oxford, and Sarawak’s own Pustaka Negeri.

The BRC Board of Directors said in all, Professor Reece’s work as a scholar and teacher had greatly enriched their knowledge and understanding of Borneo’s past and its continuing impact on the present.
The start of semester two sees Murdoch staff getting active and taking part in the first ever Murdoch Campus Fun Run and the annual Rebel Sport City to Surf for Activ.

As Explore went to press, staff, students and friends were getting ready for the Murdoch Campus Fun Run on August 14, either running or walking the 4km or 8km scenic courses through the South Street campus.

And over 100 staff and friends are expected to pound the pavement from the Perth Esplanade to City Beach on August 29 as part of Team Murdoch. More than 30,000 people participate in the annual City to Surf event.

Team Murdoch – easily identified in red running tops – will be able to replenish their energy stores with a barbeque in a Murdoch marquee at the finish line.

All entrants in the 2010 Rebel Sport City to Surf for Activ will be automatically entered in the Entry Prize Draw to be in the running to win an Intrepid Travel package valued at $5000.

Then on September 3 old rivalries will once again go head to head as the Murdoch Staff Games take over the South Street campus. Faculty and Division teams will compete in mixed netball, indoor soccer, table tennis, 8 ball pool, dodgeball, leaderball and tunnelball.

Sport and Recreation Centre Manager Adrian Fisher said it was great to see such a huge growth in the Staff Games, with more than 200 staff participating in 2009 and an increase expected for the 2010 Games.

"The Games are an important way of promoting the importance of health and wellbeing and boosting staff morale," Mr Fisher said.

"The camaraderie and enthusiasm of staff last year was fantastic.

"The Games are a great opportunity to mix and get to know people from across the University in an informal environment."

The NUS also kindly offered all Murdoch’s athletes accommodation in the on-campus student village.

The Murdoch tennis and rugby teams led the way and came home undefeated. The men's and women's basketball teams also had a great run, winning all but one match in closely contested games.

Ultimate frisbee stayed competitive for the whole week, despite the team playing two games each night in the hot, sticky Singapore conditions, and the men’s soccer team pulled out a great performance after a slow start to draw with the Singapore University Champions SIM in the last game.

Murdoch's SMa Singapore students also joined the South Street campus players, giving their support to the rugby, ultimate frisbee and soccer teams.

"They seemed to love the opportunity to represent their University and were very friendly mixing and mingling with the South Street students, even taking them out to restaurants and night clubs," said Murdoch team leader Suresh Ponnusamy, a SMa Murdoch student based in Singapore, said he felt lucky to be able to join the Murdoch rugby team: "I thought I would never get the chance to play for Murdoch since I didn’t go to the Perth campus – but the guys made me feel very welcome from the first moment."

Mr Fisher said overall the tour was very successful both on and off the field.

"Great matches were played and won, strong relationships were built with NUS, SIM and NTU, our Singapore-based Murdoch students got to represent their University on the sports field and a great time was experienced by all!"