

# definingnz

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AUGUST 2009

## Historian's journey

Inspired by the stories of the past

Research to revolutionise solar energy

High-tech, high adventure





Steve Maharey

“For too long we have talked about the knowledge society, step change in industry and the need to resolve major social, environmental and cultural issues. Massey is committed to providing the evidence base for change. But this will only be of value if it is in the hands of decision makers – wherever they may be.”

# Working across boundaries

**Welcome** to DefiningNZ for August. This issue is a celebration of staff achievements. Every issue of DefiningNZ inevitably celebrates the work of staff because the reputation of any university is built on the people who work there. In past issues we have tended to focus on a particular part Massey. For August we decided to showcase some of the outstanding work of staff from across the University.

Showcasing a cross-section of Massey's strengths is appropriate because over the years we have seen that much of our uniqueness has come from our multi-disciplinary approach. These days working across boundaries is encouraged by many institutions. At Massey it has long been taken for granted.

During a recent visit to Massey, the newly appointed Chief Science Adviser, Dr Peter Gluckman, made a point of discussing the high level of collaboration and cooperation he observed. He noted that Massey staff not only worked together but they also enter into working relationships with many other institutions nationally and internationally.

We were delighted to hear Dr Gluckman's comments because he succinctly captured an essential feature of Massey culture. We see the best work as coming from engagement between people determined to produce outstanding teaching and ground-breaking research. Massey's achievements over many years have been fuelled by this approach.

It has been reinforced, particularly over the past two decades, by the many changes Massey has been through. The shift to a multi-campus environment and changes to the way academic life is organised has encouraged the culture of collaboration. This period of change has built on a history of change embracing behaviour.

Working with other academics and researchers is only one dimension of Massey's preference to engage with others. We also see it as vital to engage with the end users of knowledge. In fact we prefer to work as partners. We believe that in these challenging times our willingness to engage will be a major strength not only for our work within the University but for the wider society.

There is no doubt we need to change as a nation. For too long we have talked about the knowledge society, step change in industry and the need to resolve major social, environmental and cultural issues. Massey is committed to providing the evidence base for change. But this will only be of value if it is in the hands of decision makers – wherever they may be.

This is one of the reasons we want to showcase the Massey people whose work can make a difference to our collective future. We hope you will not only enjoy reading about them but that you will also be inspired to be in contact with them and others. Who knows where that contact may lead?

In this issue you can read about Massey's new Humanities and Social Sciences Pro Vice-Chancellor, Professor Susan Mumm, who brings with her a world-class reputation as a historian; Professor Chris Cunningham, who is working with a Lower Hutt primary school to encourage an expectation that those children will go to university; Professor Frazer Allan, the new head of the Institute of Veterinary, Animal and Biomedical Sciences; and Associate Professor Ashton Partridge, whose research aims to produce super-efficient roof panels that could one day power not only your home but two electric cars as well.



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Professor Susan Mumm found her passion in the stories of the 19th century.

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**Editor: Kereama Beal** email: [editor@massey.ac.nz](mailto:editor@massey.ac.nz)  
For circulation changes/requirements please contact:  
David Wiltshire email: [d.wiltshire@massey.ac.nz](mailto:d.wiltshire@massey.ac.nz)



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# Harnessing the Sun

Harnessing the Sun's energy to create electricity is not a new idea, but research being led by chemist Ashton Partridge could revolutionise the concept, as Bryan Gibson finds out. – *Photographs: David Wiltshire*

A team led by Associate Professor Partridge, from the Institute of Fundamental Sciences, has won \$5.76 million to further its research into high efficiency photovoltaic solar panels.

"These are plastic panels," Partridge says. "At the moment you have silicon panels; now they're fine but they're also very expensive. The installation cost is expensive. They're very brittle. If hail hits them they will break."

The new panels would be far more sustainable. "They're recyclable too. After a 25-year lifetime, we can chip them down and just reuse them as a base material."

Partridge's team is made up of scientists from across the globe, each playing a vital part in the project. It includes members of Auckland University's engineering school, while scientists at Canterbury and Otago universities are also involved with various aspects of the research.

As an organic chemist, Partridge is focused on the dyes that convert the sun's energy into electricity.

"Photons from the sun are absorbed by the dye," he says. "Because the dye itself is coloured it will absorb in the visible spectrum. Most of the sun's energy is within that spectrum, and so you can see the light. The electron is excited and is removed from the dye molecule."

"The problem we've had to overcome with photovoltaics is how easily that electron is bumped out and how easily it is transmitted from one layer to the other. Eventually it has to end up in the copper wire, but there are a whole lot of interfaces there. The problem is minimising the impedance, or resistance. That's the art."

The work on dyes is continuing at the Massey-based MacDiarmid Institute for Advanced Materials and Nanotechnology, which Partridge heads. "But we have commercial partners we're working with, we have a proof of concept device and we have a route to market."

The final product is a plastic tile that could be used to cover an entire roof, which has obvious benefits.

"Let's say on average you get 650 watts per metre squared of roof space," Partridge says. "If we could harvest 10 per cent of that, based on average roof areas and average power consumption, we could generate enough energy for the total needs of a house plus two electric vehicles."

The beauty of the project is the large number of institutions involved, which Partridge says must be done more if New Zealand is to flourish as a scientific nation.

"This project spans a whole lot of research institutes and endeavours to get us all working together, so that we can actually produce something for New Zealand. New Zealanders and Australians are some of the best scientists in the world; we just have to be focused and we have to work together."

The aim is to keep the intellectual property in New Zealand as much as possible and for there to eventually be a photovoltaics industry here in New Zealand, he says.

The work is not new to Partridge, who has been working on conducting polymers for the best part of 20 years.

He collaborated with Alan MacDiarmid for eight years making an electronic nose: a computer that could smell.

Now there are a number of PhD students from around the world working with him on either this project or others related to conducting polymers.

"There are two working on dyes, and I have six working on different types of sensors for different applications."

It is this type of sustainable, environmentally focused research that Partridge sees as appealing to new scientists.

"We've got a whole stack of kids coming up through the university system and we need places for them to work. They need to be excited, they need to see a future in science, and hopefully this will help give them that." ❖



Krishanthi Jayasundera (postdoctoral student), Adam Stephenson (PhD student), Nyree Parker (PhD student), Associate Professor Ashton Partridge, Emad Al-Imarah (PhD student), Helen Hsu (PhD student), Zoe Matthews (PhD student)

**Massey** has struck a collaborative partnership with the Centre for Nanotechnology and Molecular Materials at Wake Forest University in North Carolina to work on the development of next generation solar cells, new portable sensing technologies for medical and bio-defence applications, lighting systems and nanomaterials.

The partnership will establish a long-term exchange of scientists and engineering capabilities between the universities. It will also provide exchange student experiences for undergraduate and graduate students.

The effort, led by Associate Professor Ashton Partridge from the MacDiarmid Institute at Massey and Professor David Carroll from Wake Forest, will focus on the development of market ready technologies.

"The agreement will provide Massey University with strong scientific partners at the Nanotech Centre and can provide a convenient gateway to commercialise into the US market, Carroll says. "For Wake Forest University, Massey provides complementary engineering capabilities for continued development of our device programmes."

# Digging into the past

Professor Susan Mumm tells Jennifer Little how she grew up on a Canadian sheep farm, attended a school run by ex-missionaries and an American finishing school for southern belles – then found her passion in the stories of 19th century nuns, prostitutes and slaves. – *Photographs: David Wiltshire*

**Learning** how to castrate lambs and dock their tails have proved unnecessary skills for adulthood for Canadian historian Susan Mumm. So has learning how to demurely alight from a sports car wearing a mini-skirt and peel every imaginable type of fruit with a knife and fork at a finishing school in Atlanta, Georgia.

But many of her early experiences have had a bearing on the direction of her academic work, which targets the lives of women constrained by the social, economic and religious mores of their time.

Mumm, 48, the University's new Pro Vice-Chancellor of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, has written widely on the international trafficking of women in the 19th century as well Victorian-era brothels, convents and hospitals.

She grew up in the 1960s, one of five sisters and a brother on her parents' Saskatchewan farm. "It was an incredibly idyllic childhood where I ran wild unsupervised across huge acreage. I had freedom that children of today can't imagine."

While her parents valued education and were avid readers, despite having left school themselves at age 12, there was no concept of attending university for the children of struggling farmers. It was a simple life. “We had no indoor toilet, no appliances like washing machines. We were not the sort of people who go to university, not the likes of us – that was the message.”

Mumm left the farm when she was 15 to board at a “crazy” school run by British ex-missionaries near Moose Jaw. She says the education was good but although her teachers noted her intellect, no one suggested she take it further.

After a brief and incongruous stint at finishing school she returned to Canada, where she accompanied a friend who had enrolled in an economics night class at the University of Saskatchewan but was afraid to go onto the campus alone.

Mumm had an epiphany while standing in the campus bookstore. “I felt very intimidated but I stood around listening to what people were saying and watching them, and I had this blinding revelation. These people didn’t look any smarter than me, they didn’t sound any smarter than me. I thought about it for a few minutes and said to myself ‘maybe I’m smart enough to go to university’.”

She enrolled in a double bachelor in English and history and, after a fretful

first six weeks, the feedback from her first set of essays confirmed she was indeed in the right place. Then, purely because other courses were full, she walked into a lecture on the condition of women in the 19th century for a paper on British social history.

“The lecture spoke to me. I could immediately see my mothers and sisters and, although their legal standing was different, many of the conditions of their lives were exactly the same.”

From this she learned that the past has a resonance that profoundly affects the present and, on a personal level, that university can be a “transformative” experience.

She won a Commonwealth scholarship to study at the University of Sussex before beginning her academic career as an Assistant Professor at York University in Toronto. A decade at the Open University in England and two years at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, Nova Scotia as Dean of Arts and Science followed.

She has focused her research on “women who find cracks of opportunity in a world of constraint”, delving into the lives of those who lived and worked in convents, brothels and charitable women’s organisations.

She has published three books – *Religion Today: A Reader* (Ashgate Press/Open University 2002), *All Saints Sisters of the Poor: An Anglican Community in the Nineteenth Century* (Brewster & Boydell 2001), *Stolen Daughters, Virgin Mothers: Anglican Sisterhoods in Victorian Britain* (Leicester University Press 1999) – and edited the 19th century volume of *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Love, Courtship and Sexuality*

*through History* (Greenwood 2008).

Her numerous published articles include *Making Space, Taking Space: Spatial Discomfort, Gender and Victorian Religion* (Project Canterbury 2007), in which she investigates the extraordinary (to modern perceptions) controversy surrounding the establishment of 90 communities for women in the Church of England between 1845 and 1900. Convents were depicted by authorities as “indescribably hellish prisons” and “dens of infamy” during a time when the notion of a separate space where women could gather was scorned, and convent and confessional pornography flourished.

Mumm, who served on a British government committee for the suppression of people trafficking, is proud to say an article she wrote on 19th century white slavery and its modern manifestations, which was re-published in the British Independent newspaper, has transformed lives.

A man contacted her after reading the article and, on her recommendation, left his fortune to Anti-Slavery International, a charity and lobby group. “Probably hundreds of children have been released from enslavement as a result.”

Modern people-trafficking is driven by the same basic forces as it was in the 19th century, she says. “If you take poverty, restricted choices, a desire for a better life and quite a high

level of naivety regarding promises of marriage or a better job somewhere else – these are the weapons. Desperate people take a gamble; they have nothing to lose.”

She is currently three years into researching a book on the history of the Young Women’s Christian Association in Britain and the Commonwealth from 1855-1920, an organisation that grew out of need. “There was a real lack of space in urban areas for women to stay. The YWCA took off like a rocket, with more than a million members by 1900.” It provided accommodation and security for otherwise vulnerable single female immigrants arriving for new jobs in port cities around the Commonwealth. She says she is the first person since 1906 to have been given unfettered access to the organisation’s comprehensive archives in Coventry.

Mumm, married with two adult sons who live in Canada, joined Massey in February. She describes herself as “a women’s historian” rather than a feminist one. “I’m certainly a feminist in my own life and opinions. But I have to try not to impose my views on the people I study.”

When not immersed in research and overseeing the college’s 364 academic staff, 9200 students, nine schools and six centres across three campuses, she loves reading murder mysteries and gardening.

“I love to dig. In Western society, which was agrarian for centuries, you can’t be a historian without thinking about the roots of our society and how many other spades have gone through the soil.” ❖





# Planting the seeds of expectation

Professor of Māori Health Chris Cunningham talks to Lana Simmons-Donaldson about what and who inspired his career path, and shares why he's happy in his work.

Six-year-olds Thomas Mannix and Cameron Davis-Herlihy hard at work painting their rakau with Professor Chris Cunningham – *Photograph: Mark Coote*

**Chris** Cunningham's fate was probably sealed when he was 11 and the Taita Intermediate deputy principal wrote "university material" on his school report.

He did not know at the time what "university material" meant, but he still has the report and, six years ago when he delivered his first lecture as Professor of Māori Health, he acknowledged Maureen Kós the teacher who wrote the comment and so planted a seed of expectation that influenced his career path.

Mrs Kós, now 88 and retired in Rawene on the Hokianga Harbour, remembers her former pupil fondly. "He was a lovely boy; shy, quiet, very respectful and seemed to absorb everything."

He went from intermediate to Taita College and then, in 1979 at age 17, to Victoria University. Despite growing up in Lower Hutt he had made only a few previous visits to Wellington.

He studied fulltime, completing a Bachelor of Science followed by an honours degree and then a doctorate in chemistry, graduating in 1988.

He worked at Manatu Māori, one of two transition agencies between the former Ministry of Maori Affairs and the Ministry of Maori Development – Te Puni Kōkiri, then the Ministry of Health providing policy advice on how to provide better health services to Māori. He and his wife Joanne, who also holds a doctorate in chemistry, married when he was 30 and they now have four children.

In 1996 he received a visit that would change his path again, towards Massey University. "One day I was at work and a shadow appeared across my desk. I looked up and it was a certain Professor of Māori Studies [Mason Durie]. He asked me, 'are you happy in your work?'"

Cunningham has worked at Massey ever since. He is a Professor of Māori Health and director of Te Pūmanawa Hauora (the University's Research Centre for Māori Health and Development)

and is also an Honorary Professor at the Wellington School of Medicine and an Honorary Professor at the University of Sydney. He is a full time supervisor and doctoral supervisor of 15 doctoral students.

Cunningham (Ngāti Toa and Ngāti Raukawa) describes himself as an urban Maori. He grew up in a working-class family with a Māori mother and Pākehā father who are still living in the Hutt Valley. Most things Māori he learnt as an adult.

"I am really fortunate to be someone that has had a positive school and university experience and managed to get through the New Zealand education system and achieve a PhD."

**"I am really fortunate to be someone that has had a positive school and University experience and managed to get through the New Zealand education system and achieve a PhD."**

**– Chris Cunningham**

He and his team work on major projects relating to health research on breastfeeding, cancer, diabetes, mental illness, the elderly and children.

Te Pūmanawa Hauora has been successful in obtaining major external funding for its work, including in 2007 \$2.3 million from the Health Research Council. In the same year the team won the University's medal for outstanding research.

More recently Cunningham, Durie and Massey's Professor Neil Pearce were part of another team that received more than \$2 million funding to conduct a national study of Māori diagnosed with cancer, their whānau and cancer care service.

He says the most fun current project is with Sacred Heart School, an integrated Catholic primary school in Petone. While the focus is on nutrition and physical education, the goal is to normalise the expectation that those children will attend university.

"It's a really good community initiative and shows that academics are not all pointy headed time wasters.

"The motivation I received all those years ago from Maureen Kós made me determined to go to university. At that time and in that community I was the exception. For kids today, I want to make it the norm." ❖

## Academics get active for te reo

**Massey** academics got involved with poi making and Māori legend for Māori language week earlier this month as part of an initiative with a Wellington school.

Professor Chris Cunningham and colleagues from Te Pūmanawa Hauora, the University's Research Centre for Māori Health and Development, celebrated the week with activities at the Petone foreshore and nearby Sacred Heart Primary School to promote physical activity as part of a partnership between the school and the University.

Other activities include painting rakau for traditional tititorea stick games and discussing the artist's mural along the Petone foreshore depicting the legend of Ngake and Whataitai and how the Wellington harbour was formed.

"The initiative is part of a memorandum of understanding the University has with the school aimed at making it a normal expectation that kids at the school will go to university.

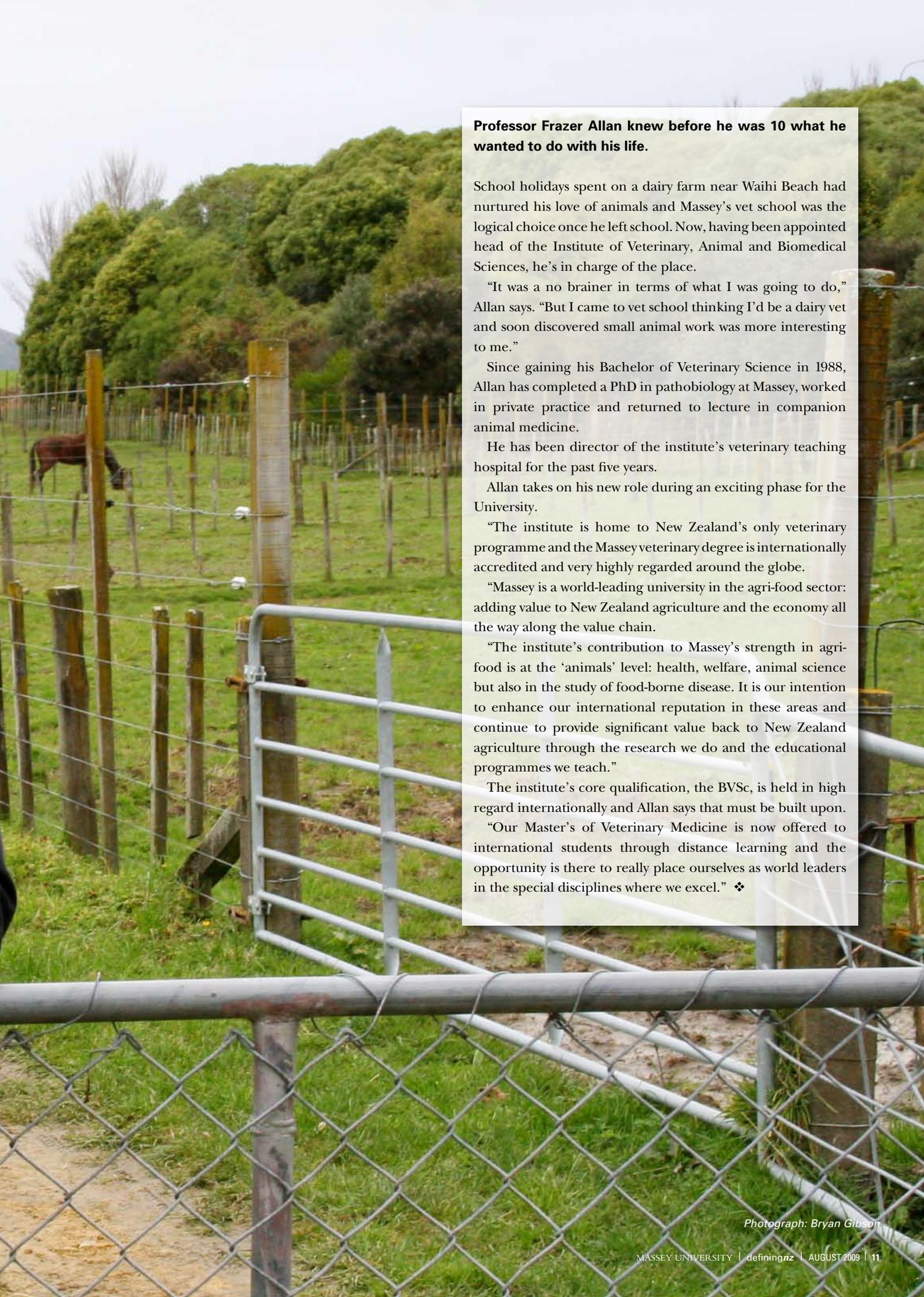
"There is a lot of focus on secondary school students; by then it's too late. We are supporting them with a physical activity and nutrition programme."

Cunningham says the partnership is in its second year. Last year the school took part in a successful healthy lunches initiative called Ka Pai Kai. "It was a great success and is the first of several we hope to roll out over the next few years to make Sacred Heart Primary School a leader in supporting children and whānau to healthier lives."

School principal Joan McGrath says it takes a sustained effort over a long period to reinforce positive messages. "These initiatives need longer than a year to be effective and without Massey's support we wouldn't be able to sustain the activities."

The next joint project between the school and Massey will be in September, when Olympic athletics legend Dr Peter Snell will visit to open a school vegetable garden. ❖





**Professor Frazer Allan knew before he was 10 what he wanted to do with his life.**

School holidays spent on a dairy farm near Waihi Beach had nurtured his love of animals and Massey's vet school was the logical choice once he left school. Now, having been appointed head of the Institute of Veterinary, Animal and Biomedical Sciences, he's in charge of the place.

"It was a no brainer in terms of what I was going to do," Allan says. "But I came to vet school thinking I'd be a dairy vet and soon discovered small animal work was more interesting to me."

Since gaining his Bachelor of Veterinary Science in 1988, Allan has completed a PhD in pathobiology at Massey, worked in private practice and returned to lecture in companion animal medicine.

He has been director of the institute's veterinary teaching hospital for the past five years.

Allan takes on his new role during an exciting phase for the University.

"The institute is home to New Zealand's only veterinary programme and the Massey veterinary degree is internationally accredited and very highly regarded around the globe.

"Massey is a world-leading university in the agri-food sector: adding value to New Zealand agriculture and the economy all the way along the value chain.

"The institute's contribution to Massey's strength in agri-food is at the 'animals' level: health, welfare, animal science but also in the study of food-borne disease. It is our intention to enhance our international reputation in these areas and continue to provide significant value back to New Zealand agriculture through the research we do and the educational programmes we teach."

The institute's core qualification, the BVSc, is held in high regard internationally and Allan says that must be built upon.

"Our Master's of Veterinary Medicine is now offered to international students through distance learning and the opportunity is there to really place ourselves as world leaders in the special disciplines where we excel." ❖

Photograph: Bryan Gibson



# Changing the story for a better outcome

Professor Andy Lock discusses discursive therapies with Jennifer Little, and talks about how the revolutionary conversation-based methods works.

– *Photograph David Wiltshire*

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**Psychology** master's graduate Marion Gibson wishes discursive – or conversation-based - therapies and not just drug treatment had been on offer when she suffered anorexia nervosa as a young woman.

She says the newly emerging group of therapies has proven particularly helpful in treating anorexics, and is convinced she might have recovered sooner from her own 10-year battle with the illness if these therapies – now taught exclusively at the University's School of Psychology through a unique web-based programme – had been available.

That discursive therapy involves talking is self-evident. An umbrella term for various so-called postmodern or third-age therapies such as narrative, solution-focused and collaborative language systems therapies, it is used widely in the United States, Australasia and Britain.

Professor Andy Lock, who coordinates the Postgraduate Diploma in Discursive Therapies, says the approach is revolutionary. "It works by abandoning the notion that therapists possess better understandings of the circumstances of clients' lives than the clients do themselves," he says.

"Discursive therapies are concerned with how people make sense of their worlds and, when the sense they make of their worlds leads to problems for them, how better or more preferable ways of making sense may be constructed in therapy."

They are based on an understanding that people create "stories" about their lives and sometimes the stories,

words and their meanings they use to articulate experiences can be destructive.

Lock says a solution might be to help or encourage them to create a new story that accommodates what was seen as a problem. Someone with schizophrenia who hears voices may be able to find a new way of responding to and managing those voices that reduces anxiety, distress and disruption in their lives.

The therapies work on the premise that "naming, understanding and meaning-making are human undertakings realised differently across different social contexts". They are especially suited to multicultural societies because they accommodate different ways people express and define experiences according to their own cultural norms.

He emphasises that the dynamics of the therapist-client relationship are central to discursive therapies. There is no assumed superiority on the part of the therapist in knowing what's best for the client.

Lock, who has written numerous books and journal articles on the subject and the connection between language, self and identity has been the focus of his academic work since the 1970s.

At the University of Lancaster's department of psychology he

researched and published his observations of the interactions between mothers and babies, and how this communication contributes to the development of a person's sense of self.

He later worked with anthropologists studying mother-baby interactions in Asia, Africa and Europe to carry out what was then ground-breaking research into the different ways people use language to make meaning across cultures.

He created Massey's programme five years ago, an entirely web-based one-year full-time (or three years part-time) course that has attracted students from around the world.

They are taught online by academics and practitioners from American, Australian, British and Canadian universities as well as Massey.

"This is a unique element of this programme, enabling Massey students to benefit from direct contact with the international leaders in the field," he says.

One of the programme's graduates, social worker Clarke Millar, says he finds the therapy very useful and effective in working with

"Discursive therapies are concerned with how people make sense of their worlds and, when the sense they make of their worlds leads to problems for them, how better or more preferable ways of making sense may be constructed in therapy."

– Professor Andy Lock



young people at the Auckland District Health Board's Kari Centre, a child and adolescent mental health assessment and treatment centre.

"Clients really respond to being listened to, and being respected," he says. "Discursive therapy respects their resilience and strengths. It allows for interest in the stories that go beyond the problems in their lives. It opens up other possibilities."

Gibson, a secondary school teacher, studied psychology extramurally from 2001-04 and did her master's thesis on anorexia after her interest was sparked doing a psychology paper when she trained to be a teacher 30 years ago. Last year she gained a Postgraduate Diploma in Discursive Therapies, which she hopes to put into practice initially for a first year of required supervision at Hutt Hospital's eating disorder clinic.

"Discursive therapies offer a different way of working – sometimes alongside traditional and medical treatment such as cognitive behaviour therapy and drugs," she says. "It treats the person as the expert of their problem, not the other way around. It's solution-focused. For anorexics, for example, it's not about the food, it's about making sense and meaning of what the anorexia is for them." ❖



— Photographs: Doug Cole

# Taking the plunge – diving champ an A+ student

**Second-year** Bachelor of Food Technology honours student Hannah Wood could be forgiven for turning up at her 9am food technology lectures looking a little fatigued sometimes.

Two mornings a week she is up at 5.30 to drive from her home in Orewa, north of Auckland, to West Wave Aquatic Centre in west Auckland for an hour of diving training before heading to her first lecture at the Albany campus.

The pool is only slightly heated. And being a diver, not a swimmer, she does not wear a wetsuit.

“It gets cold waiting to dive. We sometimes have to hold hot water bottles,” she says.

She trains also on Wednesday and Thursday nights, diving or doing aerobic training in the gym, or somersault practice on the trampoline from 6pm until 8pm, then drives home to eat and work on her university assignments till late.

She trains on Saturdays too, perfecting dives such as the inward two and a half somersault, the back one and a half somersault, and one and a half twist, which earned her the title platform New Zealand national champion for girls aged 16-18 in 2007 and last year, and fourth place in last year’s Australian championships in Tasmania.

This major time and energy commitment to her sport has not dented her academic performance a jot. She was awarded a Massey University Albany-Harbour Sport Academic Tuition fee award last month for her achievements as an A+ student.

It is the latest of a swag of scholarships she has collected. Last year she was awarded a Massey Food Technology Scholarship for an essay she wrote on the food industry, as well as a Massey University High Achiever’s Scholarship (academic). Earlier this year she earned a Massey University Undergraduate Scholarship based on her grades.

How does she do it all? Hannah, 18, says years of gymnastics training before and after school helped prepare her for her



current regime as a competitive diver representing her North Harbour Diving Club and being a full-time student.

She took up diving four years ago when a knee injury forced her to quit gymnastics. Although divers have to be just as fit, strong and agile as gymnasts, they are slightly less prone to damaging to their joints.

Being a top diver requires endless practice and repetition, she says, as well as excellent spatial and visual awareness, feeling and timing which all contribute to the execution of a top-scoring dive.

When she’s not somersaulting from the high diving board and soaring through the air in a graceful arc, Hannah is focused on the science, maths and engineering aspects of food technology.

“It has been hard to juggle at times. Last semester I had a full-on timetable from 9am to 5pm most days.”

But her busy, intense schedule of diving and study does result in a good balance of physical and intellectual activity, says Hannah, who also finds time to mentor Year 9 girls at her church on Sundays.

A love of food and trying new products makes a career in food product development very appealing. “I think creating new food products would be the coolest job,” she says.

Ice cream, especially gelato, is a favourite. She is also keen to investigate the creation of healthy foods tailored for athletes for a future project, such as a protein, energy-rich product for gymnasts and divers for muscle development, strength and stamina.

Although ongoing knee troubles mean she is unsure about her chances of representing New Zealand in diving in the 2010 Commonwealth Games in Delhi, there is a definite twinkle in her eye at the possibility of competing in future games. ❖

— Jennifer Little

# High-tech, high adventure



With a stud below his lower lip, dress jacket and jeans, Chris Bennewith is not your typical academic. Nor does his background suggest a working life based in ivory towers. The new head of the Institute of Communication Design uses high-tech work and high-adventure recreation to inspire him he tells Paul Mulrooney

**Chris Bennewith**, 33, was lured from Britain to Wellington by the pull of the sea, proximity of the mountains and an opportunity to adapt talents honed in the commercial world.

His chosen profession defies tidy definition: The world of creative interactive design uses sound and image in a combination of physical and virtual space.

If that also sounds out of this world, before coming to Massey and his previous role as head of design department, University of Wales, Newport, Bennewith made his living operating in an alternative reality.

His platform was Squidsoup, a collaboration between like-minded visual designers, exploring the modes and effects of interactivity, looking to make digital experiences where meaningful and creative interaction can occur.

“We rely on the users’ intuition rather than their intelligence in terms of engaging with their piece of work,” he says. “It’s essentially interactive art.”

An example of his commercial exploits was his work for PlayStation where he was involved in devising on-line games to complement their latest console releases.

But Bennewith says he is leaving the commercial world behind to “concentrate on the art side of things” and use his skills as a producer of such interactive fine art and graphic design with a new generation of students raised on a diet of computer technology.

His own connection to such technology reached a pinnacle last year with the unveiling of one of his last collaborative projects Stealth. This was a high tech commentary on the development of Stealth technology during the Cold War.

Unveiled at the Victoria and Albert Museum in south London it was exhibited in the William Morris room providing “a great juxtaposition”, he says of ornate decorative art with futuristic technology.

Now it’s the immediate future Bennewith is focused on.

Priorities at the Institute of Communication Design include building postgraduate and international strategies, creating strong links with local and national industry partners and the establishment on the Wellington campus of an enterprise and research centre.

Then in November comes SWITCH, an open forum for combining the abilities and interests of students, and industry on the lookout for creative entrepreneurship. It will be launched to coincide with the *BLOW09* festival of the creative arts.

When the curtain comes down on *BLOW* for another year, it will lift on an activity-filled summer for Bennewith who hails originally from Cornwall.

“I always wanted to get back here; it seems to have everything.”

For him this includes adventurous pursuits such as snowboarding, wake-boarding and diving – the latter which he has even incorporated into one of his interactive works.

The aesthetic for a previous Squidsoup project, AltZero, was inspired by a diving trip in the Bahamas.

AltZero makes a link between game technologies, where navigable soundscapes are now the norm – but not the focus – and musical composition.

“The diving did very much influence the aesthetic of that piece of work,” he says. “The shape and colours of the corals and the sense of looking up at a ceiling of water fed directly into the design of the work.”

His next challenge is to ensure the 600-plus students at the institute, which he describes as having a “strong undergraduate provision”, are similarly engaged in a way he is, both in and outside the halls of learning.

“Here there is a place for my career but also the ability to do all the sporty things I enjoy as well.” ❖



– Photograph: Mark Coote

# Star linguist wins embassy medal

**For** someone in love with Romance languages – French, Spanish, Italian – working on a dairy farm was never going to be more than a medium-term career option.

Massey graduate Korbinian Poschl, who was recently awarded the French Embassy medal for linguistic achievement as Massey’s top French scholar for 2008, got off to a bit of a faux start in his academic life. He first enrolled to study agriculture at the Manawatu campus in 2000 then quit after his third semester to work dairy farms in the Waikato and Thames Valley.

Eighteen months of tending ruminants gave him time to ruminate on his unfulfilled desire to study romance languages. He decided to explore Europe, in particular his homeland in Germany. He had immigrated to New Zealand to live in Thames when he was 13 with his parents and three younger siblings.

“Travelling to Europe gave me exposure to several cultures and proved to be decisive for me,” Poschl says. “The trip reawakened interests that I had been neglecting – an interest in history, politics, literature, the arts and, more importantly, a love for foreign languages, in particular those from the Romance family.”

During his trip, Poschl visited Italian relatives of his father, who speaks fluent French and Spanish as well as German and English. When he started secondary school in Germany he had studied French and, after moving to Thames High School, took Māori for four years.

But it was not until he returned to New Zealand at the end of 2003 that he felt compelled to develop his natural aptitude for language learning. He enrolled in t Massey’s School of Language Studies at the Manawatu campus and studied extramurally from the family home in the Kauaeranga Valley near Thames, graduating last year with degrees in business and arts with a major in Spanish. He also studied French language, literature and history papers for his undergraduate degree and, after completing it in 2007, continued at Massey doing an advanced French language paper and three more French literature papers.

Studying extramurally gave him more flexibility in organising his workload, and meant he could continue living on the Coromandel Peninsular but have full access to Massey’s library for books and audio-visual material. He was awarded Massey scholarships in 2005, 2006 and 2007, and is described by Head of the School of Language Studies Professor Cynthia White as “outstanding” student.

“Studying languages extramurally does present challenges, but the internet has helped us overcome many of them,” Professor White says. “We have on-line resource tools and we can connect students with interactive websites Korbinian was particularly resourceful in making use of what is available on the web and in being part of the weekly online discussion class using both voice and text tools. He got mostly A-pluses and that is extremely difficult in languages because of the complexity and breadth of the system.”

Since May this year Poschl has been attending night classes in Italian in Wellington, where he works as deputy press attaché for the French Embassy. His successful studies paved the way for what he describes as his first “office job” – one which allows him to parler francais every day. The role involves updating the embassy website with news relevant to both countries, and informing local news media of developments in France that may be of interest to New Zealanders.

Poschl plans to study Arabic and Hebrew next, and his reasons for doing so highlight the case for language learning as window into understanding more fully the history, culture and politics of a people or region.

“The region where these languages are spoken is almost constantly in the news, mostly for the wrong reasons, but I believe that if you disregard the very serious political, social and economic problems for a moment, there is also a very rich and varied cultural tradition, in Israel-Palestine, as well as across the whole Arab-speaking world.” ❖ – Jennifer Little

# The dynamism of a research-led environment



**Massey's** Open Days provide a timely reminder that our campus will soon be inundated with young minds keen to explore what a university education can offer them.

While universities have changed in many ways since I nervously entered a lecture theatre as a first-year student more than 20 years ago, one thing that remains the same is the culture of research.

A great part of the university experience is finding out that your lecturers are not only teachers – they are active researchers and published authors who are often engaged in exciting and innovative work which they can draw upon in their teaching.

A walk along my corridor on the third floor of the Social Sciences Tower offers insights into the stimulating learning experience that my colleagues can offer students of today. Near the lifts is the office of Dr Nawal El-Gack, who conducted research on participatory development in her home country, Sudan, for her PhD and has worked for a number of UN agencies in nearby countries, so she speaks with considerable insight when teaching our Rich World, Poor World course.

Around the corner is Dr Nigel Parsons, whose PhD research in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and recent research in Egypt provides excellent material for his Middle Eastern Politics course.

Students enrolling in physical geography will soon be taught by another colleague, Dr Martin Brook, who prays for long stretches of fine weather on the West Coast so he can wander around on the glaciers measuring changes over time and linking this to issues such as climate change, or to more immediate dangers facing tourists visiting the glaciers.

My students, meanwhile, soon find out about my fascination with tourism and, particularly, finding ways in which this enormous industry can deliver greater benefits to poorer countries of the world. Tourism contributes over \$500 million in foreign exchange to Fiji, yet only 44 per cent of what tourists spend is actually retained there. The manager of a five-star resort here told me that 80 per cent of the food they serve is imported.

Students visiting Massey at the Open Days will have the chance to sample some of the research-led teaching here. Better still, we hope they will be inspired to stay on and become active researchers themselves. ❖

Regina Scheyvens is Associate Professor in the Development Studies programme whose research focuses on the relationship between tourism, sustainable development and poverty reduction. She has a particular interest in sustainable development options for small island states and is a past national tertiary teaching excellence award winner.

“A great part of the university experience is finding out that your lecturers are not only teachers – they are active researchers and published authors who are often engaged in exciting and innovative work which they can draw upon in their teaching.”

– Associate Professor Regina Scheyvens



Halls of residence students take on "the professionals" in a summer game of Beach Volleyball at the Manawatu Campus.

# Student life

**Students** are colourful, varied, and not always in the spotlight for the right reasons, but Massey's are a special breed who enjoy world-class facilities and services across three campuses. Student life is integral to the university experience, particularly for those studying full-time and living on campus, but also for extramural students on regular contact courses.

Campus Open Days, for this reason, showcase much more than the range of academic offerings. The annual season of "tours and open doors" kicked off at the Manawatu campus this month.

Campus events manager Anna Hamilton says 1500 had indicated they would come but it was much bigger. "It's easily the biggest Open Day we've had.

"They are a terrific opportunity to show prospective students, and their families our exceptional facilities and the vibrancy of campus life," Hamilton says.

The Manawatu campus is unique in that more than 900 students live on site in the halls of residence. The newer of which were awarded a four-star plus rating from Qualmark, New Zealand Tourism's official mark of quality for student accommodation, and all halls of residence on the campus have ratings of at least three or higher.

Manawatu Regional Registrar (Student Life) Dr Sandi Shillington says having quality support services and infrastructure is essential for students, particularly those who are away from home for the first time.

"Massey prides itself on the services we deliver to support students both academically and socially, and the feedback we've received from the students, and their families has been very positive. We have also found that students who stay in the Halls and participate in campus activities such as our "Let's get going" and PASS programmes tend to settle in well and achieve academically."

Within a stone's throw of accommodation is a fully-equipped modern gymnasium, numerous sports fields, an all-weather athletics track and beach volleyball court.

A marae, the first in New Zealand to be situated on a university campus, is at the Hokowhitu site, and at Turitea is an Islamic prayer centre, and a Christian fellowship centre.

The Albany campus offers academic programmes across all five colleges in its distinctive Spanish-style buildings surrounded by a greenbelt and located in a thriving residential, commercial and industrial hub of Auckland's North Shore.

A new student venue for entertainment and live music gigs, the Ferguson Bar, opened earlier this year. A new student amenities centre is being planned along with on-campus student accommodation, while a state-of-the-art library with additional study space, expanded information commons and café is currently under construction and due to open in November.

"One of the things students really appreciate about the Albany campus is its great location – we've got exquisite natural surroundings - bush, trees and grass areas, an amazing recreation centre and gym, stunning buildings and lecture theatres, and across the road a major shopping complex," says Regional Registrar Andrea Davies

The Wellington campus mixes old and new to provide world-class facilities in a distinctive urban environment. Students at the College of Creative Arts work in a unique environment providing ample space for disciplines such as fashion design in space initially built to house the former Dominion Museum building. A whānau room, Pasifika Room and Muslim prayer room are also on campus.

The University also manages two residential student accommodation complexes. These are located on the edge of the campus and apartments range in size from studios to five bedroom apartments.

"The Wellington campus offers great accommodation in the heart of a vibrant and dynamic city environment," says Director, Corporate and Student Services Deanna Riach

Open Days will be held at the Wellington campus on August 28 and at the Albany campus on September 12. ❖

# EVENTS

AUG

**AUGUST 28**

## Open Day

Open Day provides an opportunity for prospective students and their families to visit each campus, meet Massey staff and see first-hand what study at Massey is all about.

Choosing a university and a course of study is a big decision to make. At Open Day a wide and diverse range of courses are profiled along with on-campus accommodation, student services and the vibrant student life.

Prospective students of any age are welcome.

Wellington campus – Entrance A, Wallace Street; Entrance D, Buckle Street; Entrance E, Tasman Street

SEP

**SEPTEMBER 4 10am-5pm**

## Economics School Challenge

Inaugural High School Challenge with teams of three competing to win the first prize of \$2000 per student and \$1000 per student for the second place team.

**SEPTEMBER 9 Midday**

## Chancellor's Lecture Series

Dr Joanne Drayton "The Biographer as Detective - or perhaps Snoop?"

This paper looks at aspects of a biographer's role that makes them like a detective, but also the ethical dilemmas that this investigation into people's private lives inevitably creates. Research on expatriate artists and writers, such as Frances Hodgkins, Ngaio Marsh, Edith Collier and Rhona Haszard, will provide fascinating case studies for provocative consideration.

Study Centre, Staff Lounge, Gate 1, Albany Expressway (SH17), North Shore

**SEPTEMBER 12**

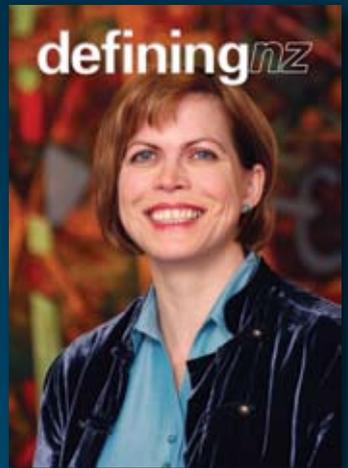
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Albany Campus – Gate 1 Albany Expressway (SH17), North Shore



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**Editor/design:** Kereama Beal  
Email: [editor@massey.ac.nz](mailto:editor@massey.ac.nz)  
Phone: 06-350-5019

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Communications and Marketing

**Communications Director**  
James Gardiner  
Email: [j.gardiner@massey.ac.nz](mailto:j.gardiner@massey.ac.nz)  
Ph: 06-350-5255

**Communications Manager**  
Lindsey Birnie  
Email: [l.birnie@massey.ac.nz](mailto:l.birnie@massey.ac.nz)  
Ph: 06-350-5185

**Māori Communications Manager**  
Lana Simmons-Donaldson  
Ph: 04-801-5799 ext 62333  
Email: [l.t.p.simmons-donaldson@massey.ac.nz](mailto:l.t.p.simmons-donaldson@massey.ac.nz)

### Albany:

Melanie McKay  
Email: [m.mckay1@massey.ac.nz](mailto:m.mckay1@massey.ac.nz)

Jennifer Little  
Email: [j.little@massey.ac.nz](mailto:j.little@massey.ac.nz)

### Manawatu:

Kereama Beal  
Email: [k.beal@massey.ac.nz](mailto:k.beal@massey.ac.nz)

Bryan Gibson  
Email: [b.r.gibson@massey.ac.nz](mailto:b.r.gibson@massey.ac.nz)

### Wellington:

Paul Mulrooney  
Email: [p.mulrooney@massey.ac.nz](mailto:p.mulrooney@massey.ac.nz)



**MASSEY UNIVERSITY**

Massey University  
Private Bag 11-222, Palmerston North  
New Zealand  
[www.massey.ac.nz](http://www.massey.ac.nz)

JAMES  
DYSON  
AWARD



An ultrasound tool set designed to quickly measure the commercial value of forests is one of three designs that gave Massey graduates or students the top placings in than annual James Dyson Awards for the second year running.

Graduate Tim Cox (pictured) was named the overall winner of the competition with a design, called Trettech, he says could revolutionise New Zealand's forestry sector.

Massey's other two finalists were design graduates, Jamaine Fraser from Hamilton, who designed a hydration blanket to aid stranded whales and Aucklander Dan McLaughlin, who created a product called Airaid which can help people living with a respiratory disease.

