Report from Leone Wheeler

This report highlights that RMIT University, Hamilton continues to offer a base for research and teaching programs that are important to the Southern Grampians region. The Bachelor of Nursing program achieved 100% employment for local graduates for the fifth consecutive year. This is a reflection of the dedication of the teaching staff. There is also a considerable depth of research being undertaken especially in the areas of regional development, sustainability and community engagement. In addition, the Geoff and Helen Handbury Fellowships offer local community members an opportunity to become involved in research projects. Local researchers are linked to internationally recognised research centres such as the School of Global Studies, Social Science and Planning and the Globalism Institute.

Outcomes of the research are disseminated through a series of Community Forums which are open to all members of the public. Judging from the feedback so far these forums are very popular. Forums cover a wide variety of topics including indigenous people and poverty, the Potter Farmland Project and treating waste water. Partnerships continue to be important to us in our development and I acknowledge the support of the Southern Grampians shire, the Western District Health Service and South West TAFE.

Also thank you to our many community supporters, especially those who volunteer to help us manage our Community Forums and those who promote our facilities, for example, the Art Works group who held an exhibition Unframed Art Works in our art studio.

New Management Structure

Management at RMIT University, Hamilton

The management group at RMIT University, Hamilton is led by Professor Alan Cumming, Pro-Vice Chancellor for the Design and Social Context Portfolio and the Vice Chancellor’s Representative in Hamilton. Professor Paul James, Director of the Globalism Institute is responsible for research direction, while Dr Leone Wheeler, Head Learning Community Partnerships manages the efficient running of teaching and learning programs and the operations of the site. Professor James provides advice and guidance on the Helen and Geoff Handbury Fellowship Research Project and the Local-Global Research Project, both coordinated by Dr Yaso Nadarajah and the Regional Development Program coordinated by Dr Robyn Eversole.

Dr Wheeler’s work is coordinated by a local team of people including Dr Kaye Schofield, Jenny Bell, Dinah Hallam, Carol Burger and James Kruger. The team is responsible for learning support services to students, invigilation services, professional development, IT support, maintenance and security of the site and the development of community projects that link to teaching and learning and research.

Community Advisory Group

A new Community Advisory Group, chaired by Professor Cumming, has now been formed with representatives from organisations representing local and state government, health, education, enterprise and community. The group has the following functions:

- To coordinate advice to RMIT on key issues facing the region.
- To provide a focused point for liaison between RMIT and the local region and community.
- To organise and support any activities which support the role of RMIT in Hamilton.

For more information contact Dr Leone Wheeler via email at leone.wheeler@rmit.edu.au
New Regional Development Program

New Regional Development Program – “Regional Development in Global Context”

RMIT University’s Regional Development Program was established in May 2006 as the new face for regional development research at RMIT.

Based in Hamilton, and part of RMIT’s School of Global Studies, Social Science and Planning, the new program is called "Regional Development in Global Context". It builds upon the work and research portfolio of the former Centre for Regional and Rural Development (CRRD), focusing on place-based and integrated development – including economic, social, environmental and cultural aspects.

Dr Robyn Eversole, formerly Research Fellow at the CRRD, has been appointed Program Director. Shelagh Krummel is the Program’s Senior Research Assistant and Project Manager.

Two books launched at RMIT in Hamilton over the past few months characterise the orientation of the new research program. Participation and Governance in Regional Development, Global Trends in an Australian Context (edited by Robyn Eversole and John Martin) focuses on the rise of public participation in development decision making, and its challenges and opportunities in the Australian context. Indigenous Peoples and Poverty, an International Perspective (edited by Robyn Eversole, John-Andrew McNeish, and Alberto D. Cimadomo) considers similarities in the socio-economic positions of indigenous peoples around the world, and what sorts of development initiatives can help diverse communities achieve their goals.

RMIT’s Regional Development Program manages a portfolio of research projects on regional-development-related issues, working in collaboration with community and government organisations and RMIT researchers. Current Regional Development Program research projects focus on: community engagement, natural resource management, consumer participation, rural health, rural governance, new industry impacts, youth, international migration, microfinance, and social inclusion in small towns.

An on-line postgraduate course, “Sustainable Regional Development” is also offered through the Program; this can be taken as a stand-alone course or as part of RMIT’s Environment and Planning degree.

Organisations, groups or individuals with an interest in regional development (encompassing social, economic and environmental aspects) are invited to contact the Regional Development Program for access to information, research expertise, and to explore opportunities for collaboration.

-Robyn Eversole

ARC Linkage grant Regional Development Program

Leveraging Remittances with Microfinance: A Cross-country Study.

Dr Robyn Eversole of the Regional Development Program and Dr Judith Shaw from the School of Global Studies, Social Science & Planning have been awarded an Australian Research Council Linkage Grant to undertake a study that recognises the high and growing significance of overseas migrant remittances as contributors to GDP and household livelihoods in many countries. It responds to current policy interest in remittances as a development resource, as well as security concerns related to informal funds transfers. This groundbreaking study will work with microfinance providers in six Asia-Pacific countries (Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Samoa, Fiji and Tonga) to investigate the impacts of remittance-linked financial services on household well-being and economic development. The study will identify how existing and new services can best promote development and poverty reduction in migrant-sending areas.

This project to be undertaken over three years will strengthen the contributions of both migrant remittances and microfinance services to poverty reduction and economic activity in poorer countries of our region. In doing so, it will help Australia contribute toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals, while promoting stability and peace in our own region. Improved financial governance, reduced informal financial flows, and ultimately, reduced pressures for migration are among the benefits of linking microfinance and migrant remittances to leverage economic development.

-Robyn Eversole
**Sustainable Regional Development Course**

RMIT's Regional Development program offers an on-line postgraduate course in Sustainable Regional Development. Sustainability has become a catch-cry in public policy making around the world, and this course provides students with key concepts and strategies for understanding and creating sustainable regional development. Focusing on economic, social, and environmental factors and their interrelationships in real-world contexts, the course provides students with insights and skills to work in private and public sector organisations where sustainability in regional development is a desired outcome.

Sustainable Regional Development is offered Semester One of each year, and can be taken as a stand-alone course or as an elective course in RMIT’s Environment and Planning degree.

In Semester One, 35 students from across Australia and internationally were enrolled in this course, taught from Hamilton. As part of their course work, they prepared case studies of a range of organisations working on regional and local development issues: from local government authorities to regional Industries.

- Robyn Eversole

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**The Local-Global Research Project**

**The Local-Global Research Project in the Hamilton region**

A project exploring the impacts of "globalization" on the sustainability of local communities in the Hamilton region is now in its third year. Researchers from RMIT University’s Globalism Institute are working in close collaboration with a community-based Critical Reference Group to look at issues related to economic development and community wellbeing across the region and the outcomes of this research can be compared with similar research conducted by the Institute in local communities across the world.

Highlights for the last 12 months include:

- The completion of a report for UNESCO on what it is like for young people growing up in the Hamilton region, completed with the assistance of students and staff from Monivae College and Heywood Secondary College;
- The launch of the first Hamilton edition of the Globalism Institute’s new journal called Local-Global: Studies in Community Sustainability;
- The holding of a very successful Mela: International Festival of Food and Thought in Hamilton in March 2006, which attracted around 300 people including international guests and people outside the region who are interested in issues to do with food production and consumption.

The collection of quantitative and qualitative data from the Hamilton region to be used in a major report that the Globalism Institute is preparing for VicHealth on the relationship between community arts and celebrations and community wellbeing.

The co-ordinator of the Local-Global Research Project for the Hamilton region, Dr Yaso Nadarajah, is also co-ordinating the successful Handbury Fellowship program for community research. Reports on the work of nine former fellowship holders have been circulated and they were all interviewed for an evaluation of the way the program has been run to date. The success of the program has resulted in the awarding of $250,000 by the federal Department of Education, Science and Training to ensure its continuation.

In the second half of 2006 the Local-Global Research Project will host a series of community forums in the region – see www.communitysustainability.info for details. A second Hamilton edition of the Local-Global journal will be produced by the end of the year and work has begun on a recipe / community education book emerging from the February Mela. The report for VicHealth will be completed by the end of October.

-Martin Mulligan

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Above: International students from RMIT cooked and served food for an international feast during the Mela.

Above: Special guest speaker was Helena Norberg-Hodge, an international expert in local food systems.
RMIT Names Handbury Fellowship Recipients

The Helen and Geoff Handbury Fellowship has this year awarded up to $65,000 to research improving the quality of life of Western Victoria and the surrounding community. RMIT University announced the grants in July and is inviting interested community members or researchers to come forward if they would like to be involved in the research.

Projects funded this year include:
- “Grampians Disability Accommodation Network”, a project assessing the sustainable living options of families with children with special needs. Awarded to Norelle Pearce on behalf of the Wimmera Parent Support Network, the Ararat Parent Support Group and the Hamilton Support Group for Parents of Children with Special Needs;
- “Sustaining a Future for Young People in Agriculture: Red Meat and Wool Industry”, a project looking at why young people no longer appear to see agriculture as a positive career and the strategies that can be put in place to reverse this trend. Awarded to Bill Hamill on behalf of the Rural Industries Skill Training Incorporated (RIST);
- “Stones, Streams, Stories and Dreams”, a project that will enable an artist to work with other local artists, local schools, RMIT University's lab.3000 as well the Glenelg Hopkins CMA and the Glenelg Southern Grampians LLEN to stage an exhibition of specialised local work. Awarded to local artist Carolyn Rundell, who is working with the Hamilton Art Gallery.

This year's selection panel included Professor Alan Cumming, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Design and Social Context, RMIT University; Councillor Howard Templeton, Southern Grampians Shire Council; Olive McVicker, Geoff Handbury’s representative; Professor Paul James, Research Director, RMIT Hamilton; and Dr Yaso Nadarajah, Program Coordinator, Helen and Geoff Handbury Fellowship.

“We are very pleased with the high level of interest in the fellowship program this year,” Professor Cumming said. “I’m confident that the successful applications will realise the principles that underpin the program.”

The Helen and Geoff Handbury Fellowship, made possible with the support of Helen and Geoff Handbury, is now supported by the Federal Government Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) under its Collaborative and Structural Reform Fund (CASR).

An annual community forum will be held in Hamilton in December to facilitate discussion involving the community and researchers on new research opportunities.

-Yaso Nadarajah

Potter Farmland Project—Past, Present & Future

Potter Farmland Project – Past, Present and Future

A number of seemingly unrelated events led to a meeting of people interested in the 1980’s Potter Farmland Plan in July 2005. Those present decided that it was time to revisit ‘Potter’ and consider what had been learned – to re-fashion it for a new audience. ‘Potter’ clearly had much left to say that was emphatically relevant to today’s questions about sustainability, land management, natural resource management, personal and agency roles in decision making, and so on. With wonderful generosity, the Ian Potter Foundation has provided $75,000 to RMIT University Hamilton to scope this new ‘Potter Farmland Project – Past, Present and Future’. This has meant that the experience of those farmers and others who pioneered sustainable farming systems in the Western District twenty years ago, will not be lost on succeeding generations.

Local benefactor Mr Geoff Handbury, has kindly donated $15,000 to the management of local Potter archives, and Land and Water Australia has provided a fellowship for Hamilton student Ms Cathy Wagg, to undertake a PhD study. Ms Wagg’s project explores the effect of changes such as landscape use, climate change and community expectations on farm practice through the Potter Farmland Project’s experience.

-Kaye Scholfield

Above: Looking over Jigsaw Farms, which was an original “Potter Farm”.

Above: Mark Wooton of Jigsaw Farms, points out the improvements to the property on a map.
100% of Nursing Graduates find Employment

The commencement of 2006 saw 25 graduates of the Hamilton Bachelor of Nursing program commence full time employment as Registered Nurses in Victorian and South Australian hospitals. This represents 100% employment of RMIT Hamilton graduates for the fifth consecutive year. The Western District attracted more than 60% of the new graduates with Hamilton Base Hospital accepting six students into their graduate year program. This achievement was celebrated with a very successful and entertaining annual ball which was held in November 2005.

There were 35 new students accepted into the program for 2006 and coupled with our continuing students, they have all now completed a very busy and often demanding first semester of study. Year 2 and 3 students have completed 6 weeks of clinical experience at hospitals throughout the Western District, Geelong and Mt Gambier. This has provided students with the opportunity to put theoretical knowledge into practice in a real world environment.

We have received excellent support from our clinical agencies this year and have been able to offer students a wide choice of specialities and locations.

The mode of program delivery continues to be popular with current and prospective students, with the onsite laboratory sessions, video-conferencing and student support providing a balance between online and onsite study. Professional nursing bodies such as the Royal College of Nursing have visited the campus and our 3rd year students have received information sessions from Western District Health Service, South West Health Care and Wimmera Health Care Group to assist them in their choice of graduate year programs in 2007. We continue to have a number of academic staff from the School of Health Sciences travel to Hamilton to undertake intensive teaching days with students in Year 1 and 2.

Student success has been demonstrated by 6 of our students receiving scholarships for financial assistance towards their studies this year. The feedback from the regular Student Staff Consultative Committee Meetings with local students and Bundooora based staff has been positive and highlighted that Hamilton students are performing well.

Unfortunately our Clinical Educator Catherine Ryan has resigned to take up a position as Education Manager for Lyndoch Aged Care in Warrnambool. A replacement is currently being recruited.

-Tracey Currie

Master of Education by Project

A program, initially supported by Commonwealth Government funding through RMIT University’s School of Education, has seen the graduation of seventeen Master of Education students and one with a PhD. Students came from across the southwest and one from south east South Australia. The cluster-based system of student support meant participants could develop a highly effective peer mentoring relationship with each other. A report conducted into the program in 2004 found that the Hamilton cluster, in particular, demonstrated the benefits of a cluster based approach, supported by a team of supervisors. Students interviewed said that they found this had enhanced their learning and given them the encouragement they needed to undertake post-graduate study whilst holding down responsible full-time jobs, along with family and other commitments, and live many hours’ drive from university. Indications are that the program had very positive implications for building community capacity and for the workplace – each project was solidly based in students’ workplaces. Students found that the study method was both personally and professionally rewarding. Several of the students had made life changes following their study, including entering further study, or making significant professional changes.

In November 2005, fourteen students, graduates and supervisors of the Hamilton Master of Education cluster wrote a paper in response to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry’s Inquiry into Rural Skills, Training and Research. They were subsequently invited to appear before the Committee and a group of five graduates and supervisors put the case for this model as an example of building local capacity and strengthening rural communities. They said that the development of a ‘research culture’ at grass-roots level was considered by the group to have flow-on benefits to all sectors of rural communities. The students paid tribute to the standard of supervisors as critical to the program’s success. However they lamented that the cost of post-graduate study prevented interested others in taking up study – especially as many of them were parents supporting their own tertiary aged students in study beyond the region.

In March 2006, two students, Mary Johnson of the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority, and David Warne from Greening Australia, presented their projects to examiners in Warrnambool. Mary’s project, ‘How can we build sustainability into community development programs that will satisfy stakeholders?’ and David’s ‘Common Grounds: Strategies for Developing Partnerships for a Shared Vision of Future Land Use in South West Victoria’ were both highly praised by their examiners. Examiners pronounced each student’s work as ‘outstanding’.

All students would like to thank program supervisors: Drs David Hodges, Laurene Vaughan and Bill Vistarini and Mr Robert Bain for their support over the past six years.

-Kaye Scholfield
Community Forums

Previously known as the ‘Community Advisory Network’, this series of forums has evolved into a most stimulating set of discussions. By the end of 2005, the forums had already seen a wide range of topics presented, and in what has been a particularly successful formula, the mix of local and RMIT Melbourne presenters have highlighted just what a range of interests appeal to the residents of Southern Grampians. These included presentations on Iluka Mineral Resources, Australian Aid, secondary school sex education programs, human impact on Antarctica, and the ‘true’ story of Hamilton’s Solar car.

In 2006, the two forums so far provoked considerable discussion. The first was the launch of Dr Robyn Eversole’s latest book, Indigenous People and Poverty – an international perspective. The book was launched by Gunditjmara elder, Ken Saunders. Damein Bell, project leader of the Lake Condah Sustainable Development Project, gave an update of activity associated with this exciting undertaking, and in particular highlighted new archeological findings discovered after the fires at Tyrendarra earlier in the year.

The second forum was linked around the ubiquitous subject of sustainability. Professor John Fien, Innovations Professor of Sustainability at RMIT presented findings on attitudes to taking action for sustainability at a local or individual level, based on extensive research conducted with young people throughout several Asian countries. The presentation prompted thoughts about either taking action, or falling victim to ‘action paralysis’. Gill Fry, of GHCMA brought responsibility for one aspect of sustainability into the limelight by giving an overview of the CMA’s upcoming Landcare strategy. The final speaker was Cathy Wagg, a PhD student who is using the Potter Farmland Project as a Case Study in looking at the effect of changes such as landscape use, climate change, community expectations, on farm practices through the Potter Farmland Project's experience.

The next forum is on August 2. It leads nicely into Sheepvention the following week by taking a look at the wool industry from a number of perspectives. Sue Thomas, Bill Hamill and Peter Small will be the guest speakers.

Each of these forums is free, and open to all. We strongly encourage anyone interested in exploring ideas, topical and untopical issues to come along – and to provide ideas for future forums.

2006 Community Forum Series

RMIT University brings you the 2006 Community Forum Series. This interesting series aims to bring thought provoking discussion on a local and global level to the Southern Grampians Community. All are welcome to attend.

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 2</td>
<td>Learning Community Partnerships forum - The Wool Industry from Different Perspectives</td>
<td>7.30pm</td>
<td>RMIT University 200 Ballarat Rd</td>
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<td>September 12</td>
<td>Handbury Fellowship Community Presentation - Taking the Sting Out of the European Wasp</td>
<td>7pm</td>
<td>Dunkeld</td>
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<td>September 19</td>
<td>Local-Global Public Lecture - Professor Manfred Steger - Globalisation As Ideology</td>
<td>7pm</td>
<td>PAC Ted Kenna room</td>
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<td>October 10</td>
<td>Handbury Fellowship Community Presentation - Building A Creative Community</td>
<td>7pm</td>
<td>Balmoral</td>
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<td>October 23</td>
<td>Local-Global Public Lecture - Dr Martin Mulligan - Creativity, the Arts and Community Wellbeing</td>
<td>7pm</td>
<td>Balmoral</td>
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<td>October 24</td>
<td>Local-Global Public Lecture - Dr Martin Mulligan - Creativity, the Arts and Community Wellbeing</td>
<td>7pm</td>
<td>RMIT University 200 Ballarat Rd</td>
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<td>November 14 (tbc)</td>
<td>Learning Community Partnerships Forum - Civic Society and Tribute to Bruce Chamberlain</td>
<td>7.30pm</td>
<td>RMIT University 200 Ballarat Rd</td>
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<td>December 1</td>
<td>The Helen &amp; Geoff Handbury Fellowships Assemblage - Community, Research and Humanity</td>
<td>7pm</td>
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Eighteen months into its formation, SGYN is proving itself to be a worthwhile exercise in ‘networking’ for community benefit.

Around fifty community agencies and individuals formed a loose alliance in late 2004 under the leadership of Glenelg Southern Grampians Primary Care Partnerships, Glenelg Southern Grampians LLEN, and RMIT Hamilton. Participants all agreed on the benefit for forming collaborative linkages to support local youth initiatives. The result was the Southern Grampians Youth Network.

Benefits of the network include practitioners ‘no longer feeling so professionally isolated’ and they now have a clearer picture of who to talk to, to support their work. In addition, the network is undertaking research and joint activities. Two areas are of particular interest: youth engagement, and emotional well-being. As a response to both, a sub-group of energetic individuals organised the Jim Stynes ‘Heroes’ Day’ for July 4 and 5, which brought together 900 year nine and ten students from across two shires.

Also last year, a group of nine second year nursing students from Red Cross and Young Nam Colleges in Korea were welcomed by the Division of Nursing and Midwifery to Hamilton. These students, who were undertaking a six week study tour based at the Bundoora campus, were hosted by families in the region. The students observed the methods of delivery of a degree program at Hamilton using mixed mode delivery, and also undertook activities at the campus about rural health, and toured Western District Health Service.

A group of visiting Senior Indonesian Health Officials will be visiting as part of a combined School of Health Sciences and School of Management collaboration in July 2006. They are undertaking a 12 week Australian Short Course in Health Service Management as part of the Indonesian Australian specialised training project funded by AusAID.

In August this year, a group of Korean nursing students from the Kyung Hee University in Soeul on a reciprocal eight week student exchange with Bundoora Nursing and Midwifery students will be hosted by local families. In addition to learning about nursing in Hamilton, they will visit ‘Sheepvention’ and gain an interesting perspective into Australian rural life!

In late 2005, three PhD students from Yogyakarta visited RMIT Hamilton to spend time with their supervisors in the by project program in the School of Education. These students will make a return visit this year. Local Indonesian speakers look forward to renewing acquaintances with the students.

Several programs at RMIT University bring their international students for field trips to the region. In late 2005, three PhD students from Yogyakarta visited RMIT Hamilton to spend time with their supervisors in the by project program in the School of Education. These students will make a return visit this year. Local Indonesian speakers look forward to renewing acquaintances with the students.

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The passing of one of RMIT Hamilton’s most tireless advocates and friends was mourned by all who knew him.

The Honourable Bruce Chamberlain, former Victorian Legislative Council President, was invited to be inaugural Chair of the Community Advisory Network at RMIT Hamilton in 1999. He served as Chair until his death in October last year.

Bruce was a longstanding supporter of education in the Hamilton region. His Parliamentary and community roles enabled him to champion a number of important causes locally, nationally and internationally, including democracy, closer international links and greater access to technology.

He will be greatly missed.

-Kaye Scholfield
Publications by RMIT Hamilton Staff

Books


Book Chapters


Journal articles


Conference Papers


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