National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy

The Minister for Education, Science and Training, the Hon Julie Bishop MP, recently announced details of the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS) Roadmap. The aim of the Roadmap is to outline priority areas of the Australian Government’s major research infrastructure investment through the NCRIS over the next five years. This recognises the need for planning and coordination of research infrastructure investments on a national scale.

The priority investment areas identified for 2006 include among others: evolving bimolecular platforms and informatics; optical and radio astronomy; integrated marine observing systems; and the structure and evolution of the Australian continent.

The NCRIS is a $542 million initiative which forms part of the Government’s Backing Australia’s Ability – Building Our Future Through Science and Innovation package. Full details of the Roadmap and the complete list of priority areas for investment are available at: http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/research_sector/policies_issues_reviews/key_issues/ncris/

Chief Scientist
Dr Jim Peacock AC has been confirmed as Australia’s new Chief Scientist. In announcing his appointment the Minister for Education, Science and Training, the Hon Julie Bishop MP, noted that the position required someone who could contribute to the building of a world-class innovation system, and forge effective partnerships between government, researchers and industry.

Dr Peacock is currently President of the Australian Academy of Science and is former head of CSIRO Plant Industry, one of the world’s leading plant research institutes. He is a Member of the Prime Minister’s Science, Engineering and Innovation Council.

The appointment is part-time and Dr Peacock will continue, part-time, in his role as a senior science leader in CSIRO.

Dr Peacock founded the GeneShears Biotechnology Company for CSIRO and he set up the GrainGene initiative and the HRZ Wheat Company linking research with the production of new wheat varieties for Australia. He played a key role in the establishment of Australia’s first and highly successful biotech crop – cotton. In 1994 Dr Peacock was made a Companion of the Order of Australia for service to science, particularly in the field of molecular biology, and to science education.

Workplace Productivity Programme
The Minister has announced the first round of the Workplace Productivity Programme which will enable Universities to:
- Reform efficiency of universities;
- Reform human resource practices;
• Improve productivity and performance through strengthened management, leadership and governance;
• Improve flexible working relationships, direct relationships with employees, and productivity and performance; and
• Reform of the efficiency, productivity and performance of universities through mergers, amalgamations and course rationalisation.

Total funding for the Programme is $83 million, with $27.2 million available in 2006. A copy of the guidelines is available at: http://www.dest.gov.au/wpp.

The first round of the programme will focus on the review and reform of financial and operational arrangements. This could include; budgeting, procurement, financial and accounting systems, asset and financial restructuring to assist universities with the transition to voluntary student unionism and operational and structural issues relating to improving productivity and performance. Murdoch University will submit a range of applications for funding for specific initiatives under this programme.

Productivity Commission to Review Public Support for Science and Innovation
The Treasurer Peter Costello, and the Minister for Education, Science and Training, Julie Bishop MP, recently announced that the Productivity Commission will undertake a research study into the economic, social and environmental returns on public support for science and innovation in Australia.

Science and innovation is a stated Government priority and is acknowledged to make a significant contribution to productivity, growth and Australia’s recent and ongoing economic and social prosperity. Minister Bishop also noted that the Government has provided significant support for research, science and innovation in Australia through the Backing Australia’s Ability and Backing Australia’s Ability: Building our Future through Science and Innovation packages. Funding for science and innovation now exceeds $5 billion each year.

The study aims to provide an evaluation of science and innovation support in Australia and will complement ongoing and planned reviews of the Backing Australia’s Ability programmes. The Commission’s study will consider all key elements of the innovation system, including research and development, and especially:
• the economic impact of public support for science and innovation, including impacts on Australia’s recent productivity performance;
• impediments to the effective functioning of Australia’s innovation system; and
• the broader social and environmental impacts.

INNOVATIVE RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES AUSTRALIA

IRUA Chair
I have been appointed as Chair of the IRU Australia group from mid March 2006. As I have previously indicated, the IRU Australia has become an increasingly powerful voice within the higher education sector.

The IRU Australia group has been highly effective and will continue to influence policy and take a lead in shaping priorities within the higher education sector. All group members are comprehensive universities who place an equally strong emphasis on teaching and research performance, while remaining cognisant of their responsibility to engage with business, community and governments in the transfer of the knowledge that they generate.
A range of reviews and issues affecting the higher education sector that directly influence Murdoch’s future are currently underway. These include areas such as the Research Quality Framework discussions; State/Federal governance issues and possible funding for engagement activities.

**Australian Science Media Centre**

The Australian Science Media Centre (AusSMC) is a national, independent, not-for-profit organisation devoted to providing evidence-based science to the public through the mainstream media. I have been appointed to the AusSMC Board, the only member from the university sector. It has a high profile Board which includes Premier Mike Rann; Mike Scott (Editor-in-Chief for Metropolitan Newspapers, John Fairfax Holdings Limited); Tim Warren (Chairman, Shell Australia Limited); and Dr Tim Flannery (Director, SA Museum).

AusSMC is first and foremost an independent service for news reporters when major science news stories hit the headlines. The overall goal is public debate and awareness on scientific issues that is based on the most up-to-date information available.

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**LEARNING AND TEACHING MASTERCLASS**

Murdoch University hosted the first Master Class as part of a series sponsored by the Innovative Research Universities Australia (IRUA) group. Focussing on Academic Integrity, the program included a series of information events to encourage honesty in assessment, discourage plagiarism and collusion and promote high standards of behaviour that protect intellectual capital and the standing of universities.

The program ran from 16 to 22 March 2006 and was presented by Charmian Eckersley, an expert in the area from the University of Newcastle. Events included a Master Class involving staff and students; Divisional meetings aimed at consultation, discussion and planning around the notion of academic integrity; and a HERDSA event that provided an opportunity to discuss academic integrity with colleagues from other universities. All events were well attended by staff and students from a broad range of discipline areas.

Following on from her meetings with the Divisions, the Assessment Committee, the Guild, Student Learning and other interested parties, Charmian assisted with the development of an outline for an academic integrity management plan aimed at a holistic university-wide approach to academic integrity. Further information or a copy of the draft outline is available from the Pro Vice Chancellor (Academic), Professor Jan Thomas, or the Teaching and Learning Centre.

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**ACE CAREERS FAIR**

On 15 March 2006, Alumni, Careers and Employment (ACE) hosted its 3rd successful Careers Fair to coincide with the major graduate recruitment drives currently operating in Australia. While the majority of employers attending were based in Western Australia, those with Eastern States branches were also present.

This year, we attracted new employers who have just embarked on graduate recruitment programs - these being RAC, Pfizer and the Aztec Group. International students were also catered for, with Macquarie Outsource actively promoting their organisation to those students returning to Malaysia and Singapore as well as Australian students who wish to work overseas. Organisations such as the Public Transport Authority and Silverchain who had never availed
themselves to careers fairs were pleased to have been invited to Murdoch to promote diverse employment opportunities within their respective industries.

Careers Fairs as a mode of company promotion, are becoming more popular among students and employers alike. The informal connection created between students and employers within a Careers Fair setting encourages both parties to gain a clearer insight into what each have to offer in terms of corporate cultures/employment opportunities and Murdoch students’ orientation/presentation.

The interdisciplinary mix that Murdoch students embrace so well was reflected in the mix of employers present. Mining, Engineering, Sciences (Environmental, Conservation Biology, Biotechnology and Biomedical Science), together with Justice, IT, Commerce (Accounting, Marketing and Management) were well represented. A total of 49 organisations (Public, Private, Professional Associations and Recruiters) were present – an increase of 11% to last year and 55% from two years ago. Feedback from the employers was extraordinarily positive, with all employers stating that the facilities, support from ACE staff and Murdoch’s hospitality was exceptional.

80% of the employers including companies such as Alliance Recruitment and PricewaterhouseCoopers have agreed to conduct special on-campus presentations relating to job search skills and professional presentation for student networking with employers. These offerings prove to be invaluable to Murdoch students and are offered at no cost to ACE.

The Careers Fair was considered by employers, students and alumni as a highly effective means for encouraging student/employer connections and to demystify the employment opportunities that their respective organisations have to offer.

### AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- Murdoch University has secured both Fulbright Awards made to applicants from Western Australia in 2006. Jessica Evans a graduate in Arts / Law with First Class honours (not to mention the Vice Chancellor’s Commendation for Academic Excellence) has been awarded a Fulbright Postgraduate Award and Professor Peter Newman, Director of the Institute for Sustainability and Technology Policy, has been awarded one of the three Senior Scholar Awards in 2006.

- Jonathan O’Brien, a student in the School of Information Technology, won the first prize at the games competition, *nullabor 2006*, held at ECU with his demonstration game called “Drive it like you stole it”. More details and a copy of his game can be downloaded from: http://www.notrees.org/index.html.

- Murdoch graduates and Alumni won seven of 18 major awards presented at a ceremony held on 11th March 2006 for the 19th Western Australian Screen Awards. Successes included the Best Tertiary Student Production. Details of the Awards are as follows:
  
  **Best Tertiary Student Production**
  
  *Story of Hong*
  
  Warren Tan

  **Award for Best Documentary Production**
  
  *A Dollar for the Good Ones*
  
  Produced and Directed by Joshua Lee

  **Award for Best Non-Traditional Narrative Production**
  
  *De Ja Vu*
  
  Produced and Directed by Peta Walter
STAFF CHANGES

Staff Awards
Murdoch University is committed to maintaining its outstanding reputation in both learning and teaching and research. This requires dedicated and talented staff who are committed to engaging with their students, helping them learn and developing their full potential, as well as actively contributing to Murdoch's excellent teaching and research reputation.

We recognise such staff through the Vice Chancellor's Excellence in Teaching Awards and Excellence in Supervision Awards. It is with great pleasure that I announce the winners of these awards for 2005.

Teaching Awards
Receiving an Excellence in Teaching Award at Murdoch University is an outstanding achievement given our reputation for high quality teaching. The Selection Committee found the calibre of teaching staff very impressive, as indicated in the short description of each recipient's teaching strengths provided below. Videos of the presentations by the six finalists are available in the Academic Staff Development section in the Library.

Johanne Klap, Division of Arts - Early Career Teaching Award, is a contract teaching staff member in the School of Education. Her teaching is focussed on the teaching practice of student teachers. Her philosophy of teaching is based on creating experiences in which students can learn, and helping student teachers understand how people, including themselves, learn. Johanne demonstrates a natural ability to combine teaching theory and practice in very enthusiastic and well structured sessions, which provide an excellent model to student teachers studying at Murdoch.

Susan Hansen, Division of Health Sciences - Early Career Teaching Award, is a Lecturer in the School of Psychology, focusing on qualitative research methods and community psychology. She also coordinates the Discourse in Psychology Network and is co-founder of the Discourse Analysis Group, both of which provide staff and students at Murdoch and elsewhere with the facilities to discuss issues of qualitative and discursive research methods. Susan provides up to date and topical resources to students for research projects and as case studies for learning about research methods. In addition, she has developed innovative and integrated assessment techniques to assist students develop the array of skills required in qualitative research.

Dr Mike van Keulen, Division of Science and Engineering - Innovative Teaching

Award for Best Production Design
Anthea Power
Inhalexhale

Award for Best Sound
Murray Christian
The Bond

Award for Best Cinematography
Mark Parish (Murdoch Alumni)
Phaid

Award for Best Animation/Visual Effects
Chris Frey (Murdoch Alumni)
Phaid
Mike van Keulen is a graduate of Murdoch and a long standing member of the Murdoch academic staff, specialising in plant biology and marine biology. He teaches on both the Murdoch and Peel campuses, and contributes to science education through chapters in textbooks and instructor resource manuals. He also maintains a strong record in marine research and is a recognised expert in seagrasses. Mike was an early adopter of online technology to provide high quality teaching and research resources to students. His innovative work in providing laboratory resources integrates strongly into his teaching and field research activities. The seamless integration of the various aspects of Mike's teaching is a model from which many staff have and can learn.

Research Supervision Awards
The maintenance of a productive research culture requires a pool of talented postgraduate research students that, in turn, necessitates quality research supervision. Two awards are made each year - one to staff in the Divisions of Health Sciences and Science & Engineering and one to staff in the Division of Arts and the Teaching & Learning Centre.

Associate Professor Lenore Layman's students in the Division of Arts benefit from the energy and enthusiasm she puts into postgraduate supervision. She demands high standards from her students and introduces them to networks that are valuable for their postgraduate research, and for their future careers. She strives to develop her student's independence as researchers, providing constructive critiques of their progress. She has supervised 18 postgraduate degrees with 12 students still current, and is widely admired for the excellence of the historians she has trained.

Associate Professor Mike Calver from the Division of Science & Engineering has thought deeply about the importance of communication and how to structure a postgraduate project so the student remains enthusiastic and not overwhelmed by the work. He also nicely judges the use of humour to refocus students at times when they might otherwise despair about their writing ability or the failure of an experiment. His generosity in helping students from other supervisors master the essentials of statistical analysis is widely appreciated.

NOTABLE EVENTS

- Two Murdoch alumni were the keynote speakers at a function to celebrate International Women's Day on 8 March 2006. Susan Hunt, Chief Executive Officer of the Perth Zoo, and Alison Gaines, Global Practice Manager (Board Consulting) for Gerard Daniels Australia, shared their personal and professional experiences and where they have been associated with Murdoch University.
- The Chancellor and I represented Murdoch University at the inauguration of Dr Michael Chaney AO as the 14th Chancellor of The University of Western Australia at a ceremony held on 19th March 2006. His Excellency Dr Ken Michael AC, Governor of Western Australia, conducted the inauguration and the event was attended by a broad cross-section of the business community as well as the higher education sector.

INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS

- On behalf of Murdoch University, Professor Gary Martin signed a student exchange agreement with Hochschule Furtwangen. The exchange partner for Furtwangen, Professor Dr Ruoss, signed on their behalf to an agreement that commenced from 1 January 2006 and
is for a three year term, with an option for automatic renewal for another three years. The exchange will provide up to two semester long places or one year long place for each year.

- A student exchange agreement has been signed with Abo Akademi University of Finland by Professor Gary Martin and Mr Johan Nikula, Director Academic Affairs and Jorma Mattinen, Rector from Abo Akademi University. The agreement commenced from 2 Jan 2006 and is for the term of 3 years, with automatic renewal for another 3 years, and provides for up to two semester long places or one year long place for each year.

- A 5-year agreement, commencing from 6th February 2006, was signed by Professor Bjorn Wittenmark, Assistant Vice Chancellor of Lund University and Professor Gary Martin for a student exchange with Lund University in Sweden to provide for two full year or four one-semester students for each year of operation.

FOR NOTING

Higher Education Workplace Relations Requirements
Murdoch has received advice from the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) that the Minister has determined that Murdoch is compliant with the Higher Education Workplace Relations Requirements (HEWRRs). As Murdoch had already received confirmation that it is compliant with the National Governance Protocols, we will now receive the increase in funding under the Commonwealth grants Scheme (5% in 2006 and 7.5% in later years).

Vale Edna Blackshaw
Edna Blackshaw passed away on 11th February 2006, aged 101. She she was Murdoch’s oldest graduate to date and her photograph hangs in the ground floor of Murdoch Library. Murdoch played an important part in her later life, and provided much intellectual stimulation and many memories for her.

Those who were a student alongside Edna comment about the insight she gave to a range of her social and political activities including women’s’ rights, Indigenous issues and mission life which were so much part of her experiences. She has documented some of her experiences at Murdoch in an oral history in the Battye Library.