



Flinders
UNIVERSITY

flinders journal

inspiring achievement

Vol 19 No 7 September 2008

Flinders examines pool chlorine boost to indigenous kids' hearing

A dip in the local swimming pool on a hot day may help to save thousands of Aboriginal children from ear infections and subsequent hearing loss, a scourge that continues to affect alarmingly high levels of children living in remote communities.

A Flinders University project has received \$662,000 from the Federal Department of Health and Ageing to investigate the effect of swimming in salt-water chlorinated pools on the prevalence of middle ear infections among remote indigenous communities in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands of northern South Australia.

Middle ear infections (otitis media) have serious short and long term consequences for indigenous people in

remote communities. They commonly cause significant hearing loss, which affects children's education and social development and, in turn, has serious implications for vocational opportunities and mental health.

Project leader, Associate Professor Linnett Sanchez, told *Flinders Journal* that 74 per cent of children tested in the APY Lands fail a hearing screening test, presenting "horrific levels of prevalence of conductive hearing loss" consistent with findings about ear disease and hearing loss in many other remote indigenous communities.

The current project will extend a small-scale study in remote Western Australian communities that found that swimming in chlorinated pools produced a major

Inside

- 2 Outback art
- 3 Flinders in cyberspace
- 4 Supreme Court internship
- 5 Harnessing research passion
- 6 Dolphin habitat crucial
- 7 Dante's women
- 8 Scott's last works

continued on page 2

Offering good advice in Utopia



Awely (Women's Ceremony) 1999 by Ada Bird Petyarre Eastern Anmatyerr born c.1930. Synthetic polymer paint on canvas. Gift of Rodney Gooch (The Rodney Gooch Personal Collection) Flinders University Art Museum 3578 © Courtesy the artist

The role of arts advisers in fostering the talent in remote Aboriginal communities went unrecognised among gallery goers for many years, but Rodney Gooch proved to be a hard man to overlook.

Gooch, who died in 2002, bequeathed much of his extensive collection of Aboriginal art to the Flinders University Art Museum, and a major new exhibition, *Gooch's Utopia*, draws on these works and others he left to the Riddoch Art Gallery.

The small communities or camps of Utopia, a tract of land 240 kilometres

northeast of Alice Springs, have become one of the leading centres of contemporary Aboriginal art, and were home to Emily Kame Kngwarreye, perhaps Australia's most famous Aboriginal artist.

Born and raised in the Adelaide suburb of Blackwood, the flamboyant Gooch became an indefatigable traveller and trekker. He went to live in Central Australia in 1977, and in the wake of a solo camel trek from Alice Springs to Sydney, became involved with the developing artists at Utopia through

his role with the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association.

According to Fiona Salmon, the exhibition's curator and Collection Manager of the Flinders Art Museum, the effect of his enthusiasm and support for the Aboriginal artists was profound and productive.

"The exhibition, while it looks at the art itself and the incredible change and development that occurred while Gooch was there, also throws light on Gooch himself and the question of art advisers, and what they do and what they can achieve," Ms Salmon said.

As well as helping the work to reach the public, Ms Salmon said Gooch, like many other art advisers, contributed to the "look and feel" of art. One of his major influences was to encourage the creative community at Utopia to move away from batik making to painting on canvas, and the shift from "craft" to "art" propelled many of the artists to a national and international audience.

Gooch left his official position in 1991 to turn agent-cum-dealer for a large number of artists. He retained his personal links with most of the artists from Utopia, keeping open house in Alice Springs for his extended Aboriginal family virtually up until his death.

Gooch's Utopia: collected works from the Central Desert will be on display at the Flinders University City Gallery from October 3 to November 23, and will then tour regional galleries.

Charles Gent

..... continued from page 1

decline in numbers of perforated eardrums, which are typically caused by middle ear infections.

"What we are going to do, in a much bigger sample, is look at ear health and hearing status combining medical examination of the children's ears with a standard battery of audiological tests," Associate Professor Sanchez said.

The new research builds on a program of hearing assessment for school-age children in the APY Lands that has been underway for five years funded by DECS and run by staff, postgraduate and undergraduate students from the University's Department of Speech Pathology and Audiology and Flinders medical students.

"The longitudinal data already obtained provide an excellent baseline for the

new project," Associate Professor Sanchez said.

Some of the APY Lands communities have pools and some do not, enabling comparative data between communities incorporating several variables including frequency of pool use to be obtained. To incorporate seasonal variations, data for the new project will be collected twice yearly, in autumn at the end of the swimming season, and again in spring.

Associate Professor Sanchez said there have already been benefits from the earlier work: collection of whole-of-population data over the past five years has assisted DECS to provide appropriate infrastructure, such as the installation of sound-field amplification systems in classrooms throughout the APY Lands, while individual assessments have identified the worst affected

children as eligible for disability support. As a direct consequence there has been a fourfold increase in the number of Anangu children meeting the hearing impairment criteria for disability support.

Associate Professor Sanchez is chief investigator on the research team which includes lecturer in audiology Ms Karen Sparrow and ear, nose and throat surgeon Associate Professor Simon Carney of the Department of Surgery, and senior staff of the Anangu Education Service of the SA Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS).

Charles Gent

Cover: Master of Audiology student Katherine Leaney conducts an otoscopic examination of a school child at Fregon Community on the APY Lands. Photo: David Turner

Virtual reality helps stroke victims re-learn skills

The effectiveness of virtual reality and simulated environments depends very much on how convincing they are to the user, and engineers and computer scientists at Flinders University are working to make the experience more life-like.

Associate Professor Paul Calder is collaborating on a biomedical engineering project that aims to help stroke patients at the Repatriation General Hospital in Adelaide rebuild neural pathways and recover their hand and eye coordination by providing them with a simulated domestic environment in which to perform repetitive, simple tasks.

“Traditionally this sort of rehabilitation has been done by providing the patients with mechanical tasks, but internationally clinicians are looking to virtual reality as a better alternative,” Associate Professor Calder said.

Associate Professor Calder, a computer scientist with an engineering background, is working with Flinders biomedical engineering staff and postgraduates to develop a virtual version of a home that will be produced by projecting an image on to a large curved screen, which wraps around the user to create the effect of immersion in a virtual environment.

In a bid to heighten the sense of reality offered by a computer-generated screen projection, Associate Professor Calder is exploring methods of tracking the user’s head movements that can be fed back to the software program, enabling the virtual environment to compensate and

thereby provide a naturalistic sense of moving in three dimensions.

One approach employs a camera and image processing to follow head movements; the other involves placing a device on the user’s head as part of a tracking system.

Charles Gent



Flinders shows its colours for cancer: The University joined an international campaign to raise awareness of the importance of breast cancer research and the Central Library building glowed pink as part of the National Breast Cancer Foundation’s Global Illumination initiative.
Photo: Ashton Claridge

Introducing Flinders to students in cyberspace

Flinders University has strengthened its online presence with the development of a Virtual Open Day website and the launch of a dedicated video channel on YouTube.

Launched to coincide with its on campus Open Day events last month, the Virtual Open Day provides prospective students from across the country and around the world with the opportunity to explore life at Flinders University online.



Students Kara Witcomb (L) and Alyssa Fletcher view Flinders on YouTube

“Basically we have created an online ‘one-stop-shop’ where students can access a range of information about Flinders, including course presentations, virtual tours of the campus, audio files explaining how to apply and a range of videos showing students’ work and their experiences on campus,” Antonia Malavazos, Web Project Officer for Flinders University, said.

“We have also created a ‘course navigator’, based on the job guide, that allows students to choose a range of activities they are interested in, which will then be matched to a list of careers that fit those interests and to the Flinders degrees that will help them get there,” she said.

Head of Admissions, Careers, Examinations and Graduation, Peter Torjul, said he believed students considering studying at university would greatly benefit from a range of

new online initiatives recently put in place.

“For example our new course information web pages were designed using the results of a usability study we conducted with prospective students and incorporated their views,” Mr Torjul said.

Visitors can access the Virtual Open Day via the Flinders University home page or by typing www.flinders.edu.au/virtualopenday into the URL. Similarly, the Flinders YouTube channel can be accessed via www.youtube.com/flindersuniversity

A Prospective Student Advisor will be available from 10am - 12noon and 3pm - 5pm to chat with students online at <http://www.flinders.edu.au/virtualopenday/information-about/prospective-student-chat.cfm> until 31 October.

Emma Kibble

No trend to Labor's losses

Political pundits and Liberal supporters might like to think that the arrival of Federal Labor government spells doom for the sitting ALP governments in the States, but Flinders political analyst Associate Professor Haydon Manning says State Labor can't be written off.

Associate Professor Manning said the circumstances leading to the Western Australian Labor government's defeat should not be extrapolated to South Australia.

In Western Australia Labor Premier, Alan Carpenter, replaced the elected Premier Geoff Gallop mid-term led and went to an early election in a bid to capitalise on the recent disarray in the Liberal leadership. Associate Professor Manning said voters were not impressed and "rejected a stale and scandal-ridden government".

Associate Professor Manning said unelected premiers have been rejected before: in South Australia, Don Dunstan's successor Des Corcoran lost the election for the ALP when he decided going early would be a boon; he ran on the slogan 'Follow The Leader'.

"We see in both cases voters happy to punish arrogance and complacency," Associate Professor Manning said.

He does not yet see sufficient evidence of any generalised national mood of voters turning against incumbent governments.

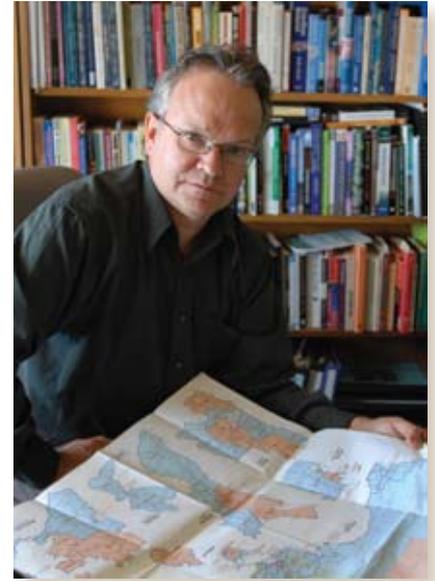
"In each situation – recently in the Northern Territory, now in Western Australia and with what may transpire in New South Wales in two year's time – there are unique dimensions as to why a sitting government finds itself in trouble. In a nutshell, the longer you are in government, no matter what political shade, the closer you are to the opposition benches. And winning a third term puts a government pretty close to that fate."

Speculation about the Rann government's future follows a recent Newspoll and *Advertiser* polls that detect Labor's primary vote and 'satisfaction' with Premier Rann in decline.

"If these recent trends are transposed to a general election in 18 months time, that would be a dire situation for Mike Rann and Labor," Associate Professor Manning said.

"However, that is just the point: there is 18 months for the Rann government to restore what appears to be dwindling electoral stocks."

While Rann's personal popularity takes a dip it remains the case that, for a Premier just past the half way mark of his second term, his performance ratings are respectable, but should they continue to decline during 2009 then the likelihood of a change of government come into focus.



Associate Professor Haydon Manning

"Indeed, in the lead-up to the election, my hunch is that respect for Rann is the asset that Labor will use again and, moreover, we have not yet seen a concerted attack on the Opposition Leader, Martin Hamilton-Smith. In short, recent published opinion polls point to Labor losing seats, hardly a surprising outcome for a Government enjoying such a large majority and 18 months away from an election."

Charles Gent



Mr Robert Cooper at the US Supreme Court

A Flinders first in US Supreme Court

A Flinders University law student has become the first Australian to be selected as a Judicial Intern at the Supreme Court of the United States.

Mr Robert Cooper, a fourth year student, began his internship at the start of this month and is looking forward to learning what life is like on the other side of the bench.

"From an Australian perspective, this internship is something out of left-field and an opportunity that will put me in good stead, not only from an academic standpoint but in terms of my knowledge of international law," Mr Cooper said.

"There is no bigger stage in the legal profession than the Supreme Court of the United States, so this is a real opportunity for me to experience something new and different and wonderful, completely removed from

everything I have experienced here at home," he said.

The Judicial Internship Programme is highly competitive, and Mr Cooper is one of only two interns serving in the autumn term.

He will be working inside the Office of the Administrative Assistant to the Chief Justice, alongside the Supreme Court Fellow. His duties will include assisting the Fellow with briefings to international visitors to the Court, administrative tasks and correspondence.

"My experiences during this internship won't include practicing law, instead they will focus on developing my understanding of how the Court operates and how it exercises its power of judicial review," Mr Cooper said.

Emma Kibble

Harnessing Flinders' passion for research

Researchers should harness their passion for their research interests – but then be flexible about the avenues through which the research can be pursued, according to Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), Professor Chris Marlin.

In a subtle shift from the usual emphasis, Professor Marlin said that 'ideas' rather than 'process' should play a key role in the approach to future research projects at Flinders University.

In an interview with *Flinders Journal*, Professor Marlin applauded the success of the University's research efforts in recent years, including the role played by the University's Areas of Strategic Research Investment, the so-called ASRIs. But he also signalled that a further refinement in the development of Flinders research agenda would now be required.

"In the current competitive environment, we need to now focus our research even further. As we do that, there will be challenges as researchers may need to redirect their research to fit within our new areas of research focus," Professor Marlin said.

"I think our researchers have done this extraordinarily well so far and have been very adaptive. But more change is now going to be required as we sharpen our research focus – while at the same time developing other initiatives like specific research centres.

"It is important that the cultural shift we have started continues. People should always focus on their core research agenda – what really excites them in

their research – rather than being too worried about the particular ways in which they pursue it.

"If people do that, they can achieve their research goals and pursue their core research agenda, but do it in a context where they can work with other people and achieve some external funding they might not otherwise have secured. Furthermore, our recent successes in research have largely been built on strong collaborations.

"The Medical Devices Partnership Program (MDPP) – a collaboration between Flinders, State and Local government and industry and community stakeholders – is an example where we are having real impact beyond the University and becoming a key part of the economic redevelopment of this part of Adelaide.

"The partnership is founded on real research strength in medical devices and involves a number of people getting behind an initiative to help the southern part of Adelaide reinvent itself in terms of the area's economic focus and future industry potential," he said.

"Another good example is the leading role Flinders is playing in the clinical change agenda. It is well known that there are problems with the sustainability of the health care system.

"Flinders has had a focus in that area over the past three or four years and is now having a real impact on thinking within government and elsewhere about the way in which the health care system operates."

Peter Gill



Professor Chris Marlin operates a knee injury simulator

ASRI successes

Medical Devices and Technology

Engaged in \$3.3 million project to establish Medical Device Partnering Program to accelerate the development of new medical devices.

Clinical Change and Health Care Research

Secured nearly \$30 million in competitive grants and tenders to research such issues as end-of-life and palliative care practices.

Eye and Vision

Comprising clinicians, researchers and nurses, the Eye and Vision ASRI has successfully attracted more than \$1.2 million in research grants.

Health and Society

Highlights include the awarding of Flinders' first Federation Fellowship to Professor Fran Baum - \$1.6 million over five years.

Other ASRI achievements include:

- Centre for Expertise in Energetic Materials (Nanostructures ASRI)
- Centre for Science Education in the 21st Century (Educational Futures)
- Seafood Cooperative Research Centre (Coasts and Catchments)
- Chair in Forensic Science (Nanostructures)
- Successful fundraising for Cancer Innovation Centre (Cancer Control)
- Singapore storm water project (Nanostructures)
- Lead institution in bid for National Centre for Groundwater Research and Training (Coasts and Catchments).

Flinders research record

Flinders research income increased from \$27 million to \$45 million from 2004 to 2007 with research contracts up from 162 to 400 over the same period.

Research key to dolphins' future



The future survival of the Port River's popular dolphin population is dependent on gaining a detailed insight into the pod's habitat and the measures needed to protect it, according to a Flinders University marine biologist.

Over the next 12 months, PhD candidate Ms Nardi Cribb will monitor the activities of the resident and transient bottle nosed dolphins within the Adelaide Dolphin Sanctuary – which includes part of the Port River and

adjacent St Vincents Gulf waters – to determine whether or not the physical and chemical aspects of the environment have an affect on their behaviour and movement.

“Until now, research of this nature has only concentrated on one area of the dolphin's habitat, such as water depth and water quality,” Ms Cribb said.

“I will be looking at a whole suite of issues, from the structure of the seabed (bare sand or seagrass) to a range of

water properties, including temperature, water depth, the amount of dissolved oxygen in the water, salinity levels, ph levels and turbidity,” she said.

According to Ms Cribb, it is hoped the results of the study, which is partially funded by the SA Department of Environment and Heritage, can be used to help further develop the management strategy for the various environments within the Sanctuary.

“In order to ensure the future survival of the population we need to preserve the areas, and we will not be able to do that effectively unless we have a clearer understanding of the areas that are important to their various activities,” Ms Cribb said.

“For instance, an earlier study of the area found that the dolphins tended to socialise or mate over the bare sand areas that are located within the river and dolphin calves were predominantly spotted swimming in this sheltered area as well, which may mean that that area is good for nursing.

“Therefore, it is essential for us to determine the importance of these areas to the dolphin population so that they can be managed and maintained for generations to come.”

Depending on the success of the study, Ms Cribb said there was potential for it to be extended to include other cetacean habitats across the state, particularly around Kangaroo Island.

Emma Kibble

Flinders environmental research is world class



Mr Austin Taylor

Research conducted by academics at Flinders University could have a significant impact in shaping future international debate on climate change, according to University Council member Mr Austin Taylor.

As Chairman of the Flinders Centre for Atmospheric Research (formerly Airborne Research Australia) for more than a decade, Mr Taylor says the work the Centre is currently undertaking is world class and is already having an impact on the local and international scientific community.

“The Centre is highly regarded across the globe for its research into environmental issues,” Mr Taylor said.

A Partner with Meertens Chartered Accountants, Mr Taylor joined the University Council in 2007, and calls

upon his professional experience in his role as Chair of the Audit Committee.

“I truly enjoy participating in the governance of the University and relish any opportunity I have to add value to the strategic direction of the Council,” he said.

“Flinders has always had a different focus in terms of its approach to teaching and learning and research excellence that has set it apart from the other learning institutions in South Australia.

“With the approach taken by our new Vice-Chancellor Professor Michael Barber, I believe the University is on the cusp of an exciting new era in all aspects of its operation,” he said.

Emma Kibble

Australian stories finding new voice

Children's literature is experiencing one of its most exciting periods and Australian authors are leading the way in contemporary storytelling, according to Flinders University's 2008 May Gibbs Fellow, Deborah Abela.

Creator of the popular children's series *Max Remy Superspy* and *Jasper Zammit (Soccer Legend)*, Ms Abela believes younger readers are reaping the benefits of a new direction in pre-teen literature.

"When I was young, a lot of stories felt very didactic but in recent years it has been a pleasure to see that writing for the younger generation has become more focused on telling the audience a story as opposed to teaching them a lesson," Ms Abela said.

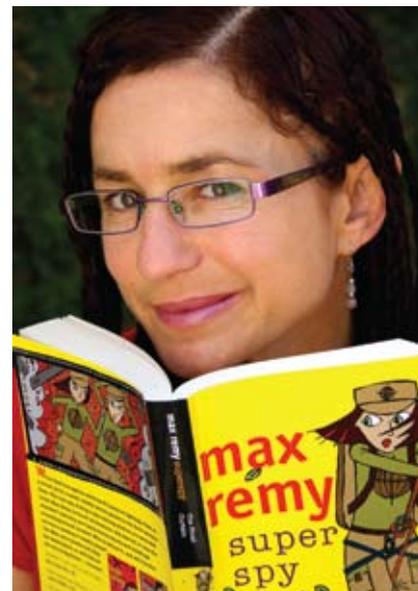
"I am also extremely lucky to be part of an era when Australian authors are setting the benchmark for these kinds

of stories. In my school library as a kid, most books were by overseas authors, largely American and European writers, but now libraries are well-stocked with Australian stories and the readers are responding to them."

As part of the Fellowship, which is an annual program jointly supported by Flinders University and the May Gibbs Trust, Ms Abela will spend two weeks in Adelaide working on her latest book. She will also give a series of lectures in English, Creative Writing and Drama at the University and conduct several writing workshops for students.

Ms Abela will present a *Writers and their Worlds* seminar on Thursday, October 9, in the Noel Stockdale Room in the Flinders University Central Library from 12.00 noon.

Emma Kibble



Ms Deborah Abela

Many small parts make large role for Dante's women



Associate Professor Diana Glenn and Dante

James Joyce called the writings of Dante his 'spiritual food' and, according to Associate Professor Diana Glenn, *The Divine Comedy* is still providing a feast for students and lovers of literature 700 years after its creation.

Associate Professor Glenn, Coordinator of Italian in the Department of Languages at Flinders, has just written a new book, *Dante's Reforming Mission and Women in the Comedy*, which examines and analyses the role of the

myriad female characters of the epic poem: 42 in all.

She said Dante's choice to write in the Italian vernacular, rather than in Latin, the official language, was instrumental in bringing women to the fore.

"One of the things that is interesting for me, apart from the philosophical, historical, Biblical and ancient pagan sources that Dante drew on, was the innovative work that he was doing with

the vernacular," Associate Professor Glenn said.

"He chose to invigorate and create a new paradigm for vernacular lyric expression, and therefore he has women characters delivering monologues, which was very unusual in the poetry of the time."

While the selective study of the female characters in *The Divine Comedy* (in isolation from the male characters) has received some specific attention over the past century, Associate Professor Glenn found that overall scholars have tended to overlook some of the clusters of women characters: "They were presented as marginal or, in the case of Pia, as simpering characters of minor interest," she said

Close examination of major figures, such as Beatrice, and the succession of smaller female roles as they appear through the poem reveals that the women carry some of the poem's major themes.

"The women take part in psychologically complex oral narratives, and Dante brings forth the role of women as having moral agency, and carrying the freight of community values," Associate Professor Glenn said.

Dante's Reforming Mission and Women in the Comedy is published by Troubador (Italian Series), U.K.

Charles Gent

Publishing Scott's last works: exhumation or celebration?



Professor Graham Tulloch and Dr Judy King

The recent release of the last two fictional works by Sir Walter Scott produced a prickly response in the Scottish press: there were murmurs about literary grave-robbing, and suggestions that reviving the unpublished works would only dishonour the great man's literary legacy.

But Flinders academic Professor Graham Tulloch believes the stories deserve an audience, and says their publication means that readers can now make up their own minds. Professor Tulloch said that while Scott's

stroke-affected handwriting did make the manuscripts of *The Siege of Malta* and the incomplete *Bizarro* difficult to decipher, the works clearly bear the stamp of the narrative and descriptive skill that made Scott one of the most popular authors of the 19th century.

Professor Tulloch and colleague Dr Judy King, who co-edited the fragment of *Bizarro* for the new edition, are veteran editors of Scott's work, and say that although producing a readable version of the two works required persistence, it relied on standard editing processes.

Professor Tulloch said a series of strokes late in his life left Scott's speech affected and sometimes incoherent, and his two previous novels, *Castle Dangerous* and *Count Robert of Paris*, were transcribed by an amanuensis and heavily edited by Scott's son-in-law and biographer, Lockhart, and his publisher Cadell. Both thought Scott should give up any attempt to write further fiction.

On a restorative voyage to Malta and Italy, however, Scott travelled alone and handwrote the two drafts himself.

The Siege of Malta, edited by Scott scholar JH (Ian) Alexander, draws on the historical defence of the island by the mediaeval Knights Templar against Ottoman Turkish invasion: "It was, for Scott, the last burst of chivalry, but it was also a bloodbath on both sides," Professor Tulloch said.

He said the book does undergo a peculiar shift: the original cast of fictional characters are abandoned mid-story and the book mutates into an essentially historical account of events.

Bizarro's plot was inspired by the more recent story of a real-life Calabrian bandit. Hearing of the brigand's violent and gruesome escapades while in Naples, Scott recorded them in his journal, and began to weave them into a novel while in Rome. The novel was cut short when Scott had another and ultimately fatal stroke in Germany on his way home.

Charles Gent

Flinders University presents the 2008 Investigator Lecture

Law and Change

The Hon Murray Gleeson, AC

Former Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia

"As Chief Justice, Murray Gleeson has been a powerful influence on the High Court and on the way Australian law has developed. He has combined a traditionalist's approach with a commitment to protection of rights where possible."

Professor David Bamford, Dean, School of Law, Flinders University

"Fostering a strong sense of the importance of the rule of law and the role of the judiciary and the independence of the judiciary in that is, I have come to learn, something that needs constant reinforcement."

Chief Justice Murray Gleeson, *The Australian* 1 February 2008.

The public is invited to this free lecture to be held on Wednesday, 19 November 2008, at 7.00pm in the Adelaide Town Hall, King William Street.

Please register your interest at:
W: www.flinders.edu.au/lectures
E: alumni@flinders.edu.au
P: (08) 8201 3707



Photos: Ashton Claridge, Jonathon Guppy
www.flinders.edu.au/news

The Media Team

Peter Gill
Head of News and Media
Mobile: 0417 784 044
peter.gill@flinders.edu.au

Charles Gent
Journalist
Telephone: (08) 8201 2965
charles.gent@flinders.edu.au

Emma Kibble
Journalist
Telephone: (08) 8201 2916
emma.kibble@flinders.edu.au