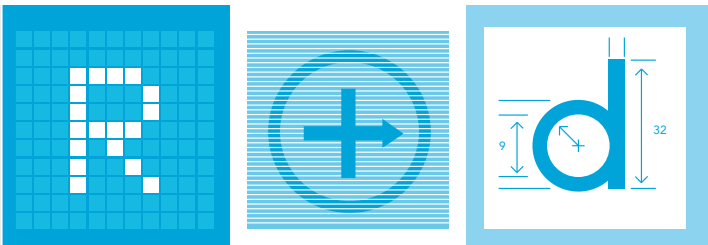


# Curtin

UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE OFFICE OF RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

JULY 2004

## OFFICE OF R&D NEWS

**Staff changes at the Office of R&D**  
The Office of R&D welcomes the following staff to their new positions:

**Dr Rodney Thiele** was appointed Director, Research and Development in March following two years as Deputy Director and six months as Acting Director. Rod is a graduate of both Curtin's Department of Applied Chemistry and the Science and Mathematics Education Centre.

**Asta Croxford** commenced a three-month contract in April and is working on publications data for the Higher Education Research Data Collection. Asta was formerly a student in the Department of Applied Physics.

**Linda Kirby** has taken on the role of Manager, Contracts and Committee Servicing after 11 years as PA to the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research and Development.

**Eleanor Bellett** has retired from the University after six years as Manager, Contracts and Committee Servicing. Eleanor had been at Curtin for 17 years, having worked previously in Committee Services and Legal Services.

**Belinda Dally** has joined the Office of Research and Development as PA to the Pro Vice-Chancellor. She has held other key positions in education and private enterprise as a PA and administrator.

**The Research Environment: Curtin and Beyond**

The Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research and Development, Professor Barney Glover, presented a major forum on The Research Environment: Curtin and Beyond on Friday 30 April. The forum attracted 80 academics and addressed important matters that will impact Curtin in the future. Some of these issues arise from the three national reviews of the current research environment. Other matters arise from major changes in the State Government's future modes of participation in research and development. The presentation is available through the i-lecture system. Go to [www.ilectures.curtin.edu.au](http://www.ilectures.curtin.edu.au), and follow the relevant links.

## SECOM FOR SARAWAK

Curtin's Research Unit for Sustainable Energy and Communication (SECOM) was officially launched in Sarawak in May. The unit will carry out development, education and training in renewable energy systems and information and communication technologies (ICT) in the rural areas of Sarawak, Sabah and Peninsular Malaysia. Its work aims to assist government agencies and industry in the economic and social development of these areas. ICT are essential to enhancing the quality of education, health, government services, entertainment and business in rural regions. However, reliable electricity is not always available in remote areas and small, renewable based power systems need to be sourced.

Professors Chem Nayar and Kah-Seng Chung were presented with RM58,100 by Deputy Chief Minister of Sarawak Tan Sri Dr George Chan to fund the initial phase of a research project to be undertaken in remote Borneo. Early research will focus on the application and cost effectiveness of renewable energy systems and innovative ICT under the varying local environments.

In addition to researching and developing renewable energy systems and effective ICT for rural areas, the unit will also develop Masters and PhD programs and undertake consultancy and networking opportunities. SECOM will be based at Curtin's Sarawak Campus in Miri.



L to R: Curtin Vice-Chancellor Professor Lance Twomey, Professor Chem Nayar, Curtin Sarawak's Nabil Affi, Professor Kah Chung, Curtin Sarawak's Dr Bijan Rohani, Chief Minister's ICT Unit director William Nyigor and Deputy Chief Minister of Sarawak Tan Sri Dr George Chan

## PVC ACTIVITIES

The Federal Government has recently announced the next phase of its investment program in research and innovation through Backing Australia's Ability-2 (BAA-2). This package includes more than \$5 billion in funding over the next seven years and represents a substantial investment in research.

The package of reforms follows many of the key recommendations from the reviews conducted by the Government during 2003, which I mentioned in the last R&D Newsletter. It has fallen short, however, of expectations – particularly given the widely held belief that the Federal Government must target its investment strategy towards growth rather than maintain existing levels of funding. Australia will continue to fall behind major OECD countries in terms of research expenditure as a percentage of GDP unless the funding in BAA-2 is significantly boosted beyond currently projected levels.

Despite concerns that the funding in BAA-2 will not strongly grow the sector, there are some very positive initiatives, including continuation of block funding schemes (such as the Institutional Grant Scheme and the Research Infrastructure Block Grant), a proposed simplification of the Research Training Scheme, a streamlined program to support commercialisation and technology development through AusIndustry, a major boost to CSIRO and significant funding for the ARC and major research infrastructure.

Clearly, Curtin is well-placed to access funding under these schemes and we have initiated – along with the other publicly funded WA universities – discussions with the State Government to develop a pro-active and coordinated approach to boost total resources for the State. A research forum, for example, is currently being planned by the State Government Office of Science and Innovation to bring together key research managers to address BAA-2 and other issues.

The Office of R&D is now taking an active part in finalising the involvement of Curtin research groups in a number of Round 9 Cooperative Research Centre applications. As readers will be aware, there has been significant controversy during the current CRC round, mainly focused on several high-profile CRCs that have failed to progress past the first stage of the evaluation process. This has direct implications for Curtin as our Centre for Marine Science and Technology recently joined the Coastal Zone, Estuary and Waterway Management CRC – one of those centres that failed to progress.

The revised CRC guidelines have serious implications for "public good" CRCs and will affect the strategies of a number of other CRCs that were considering applying for renewal in the 2006 round. Finally, we are continuing the process of consultation regarding the future strategic research directions for Curtin. Key events include the Senior Management Workshop held in Geraldton over 1-2 June, the University R&D

Committee planning retreat on 18 June, and the upcoming Research Leadership Forum to be held over 29-30 July.

It is critical that we focus, in the forthcoming months, on our future. It is expected that we will facilitate a major external review in the second half of 2004 to which your input would be greatly appreciated.



PROFESSOR BARNEY GLOVER  
Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research and Development

# RESEARCH DEVELOPMENTS

## WA ERA wins \$20 million grant

The WA Energy Research Alliance (WA ERA) has been awarded \$20 million to develop new energy solutions for the oil and gas sector, both in Australia and internationally. WA ERA led a field of 10 finalists to win the grant, which will be used to develop innovative, sustainable energy technologies and solutions for the global oil and gas industry. Funding will support 50 new research positions and about 30 additional PhD and masters students from Curtin and UWA. WA ERA is an alliance between CSIRO Petroleum, Curtin and UWA.

## Chemistry Centre (WA) moves to Curtin

On Friday 25 June, State Development Minister Clive Brown announced the Chemistry Centre (WA) will relocate to Curtin. The relocation of the Centre paves the way for the establishment of a major Minerals and Chemistry Precinct at the southern end of the Bentley Campus. The precinct would involve 200 professional research and teaching staff and would incorporate Curtin, CSIRO Minerals, the Chemistry Centre and possibly the headquarters of several large research centres. Curtin is now involved in planning for a proposed WA Institute of Chemical Sciences to build research, education and training links between the State's four public universities and organisations such as the Chemistry Centre.

## R2D3 to further oil and gas research

Research to Discover, Develop and Deploy Energy Solutions for a Sustainable Future (R2D3) was officially launched on 19 April. The joint venture, between Curtin, CSIRO, The University of Western Australia and Woodside Energy Ltd, aims to better direct more than \$25 million over the next five years into oil and gas research. The alliance will focus on research and development, training and competitive technical intelligence. Curtin will contribute to R2D3 primarily through its research expertise in Petroleum Engineering and Exploration Geophysics.

## Centre for Wine Excellence officially opened

The Centre for Wine Excellence was the venue for the official opening of the Margaret River Education Campus, of which it is a part, on May 4. Associate Professor Mark Gibberd

was appointed Head of the Centre for Wine Excellence earlier this year and will provide academic, research and industry leadership to Curtin's viticulture and oenology programs. His role also involves engaging industry in the future development of the Centre for Wine Excellence. A Forum on Wine Research, facilitated on 9 June by the Office of R&D, featured Associate Professor Gibberd's research.

## Research forums

The Centre for Research for Women hosted a researcher/consultant forum at Curtin in May. The forum provided information and networking for researchers, consultants and postgraduate students working to achieve social cohesion with a special focus on issues impacting women. The afternoon included a speech on Attributes of Feminist Research and information on levels of research assistance.

L to R: UWA Vice-Chancellor Professor Alan Robson, Minister for State Development Clive Brown, Chief of CSIRO Petroleum Professor Beverley Ronalds, Curtin Pro Vice-Chancellor R&D Professor Barney Glover, Senator David Johnston and Woodside Chief Operating Officer Keith Spence



## IN THE NEWS

- » Premier's Research Fellow Professor John Mackenzie was mentioned in *The Washington Post* on Saturday, 29 May. Professor Mackenzie spoke on the risk of the spread of SARS in scientists' own laboratories.
- » A study into the treatment of Indigenous Australians in the health system was reported in *The Australian* on 17 May. Professor Gavin Mooney, research associate Barbara Henry and PhD graduate Dr Shane Houston conducted the study.

## GRADUATE STUDIES NEWS

- » Professor Léonie Rennie recently gave a two-day workshop to higher degree by research staff and students at Curtin's Sarawak Campus in Miri. The workshop focused on the policies and procedures related to research degrees and the supervisory process.
- » Two seminars were held recently that sought to improve the relationships between students and staff. 'Supervisor/Student Relationships' and 'Supervising Postgraduate Research Students: A CBS Perspective' were the topics of discussion. Notes from both sessions and information on future seminars is available at [www.research.curtin.edu.au/scholarships/prospective/graduate/eptl.html](http://www.research.curtin.edu.au/scholarships/prospective/graduate/eptl.html)
- » CUPSA recently released a report on its Essential Facilities Survey 2004. The survey details essential facilities and postgraduate students' satisfaction with Curtin facilities. The report is available online at [www.cupsa.curtin.edu.au/noticeboard.html](http://www.cupsa.curtin.edu.au/noticeboard.html)
- » Applications for Semester 2 completion scholarships are open and full details can be viewed at [www.research.curtin.edu.au/scholarships/prospective/scholslist/completion.html](http://www.research.curtin.edu.au/scholarships/prospective/scholslist/completion.html) Applications are also open for the International Postgraduate Research Scholarship. For further information, go to [www.research.curtin.edu.au/scholarships/prospective/scholslist/iprs.html](http://www.research.curtin.edu.au/scholarships/prospective/scholslist/iprs.html)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### RESEARCH LEADERSHIP FORUM

29-30 July 2004

The Vice-Chancellor has invited 100 of Curtin's key research leaders to a two-day forum to explore how best to position the University to maximise its research capacity and capabilities in a changing and increasingly competitive external environment. Leaders have been selected from a wide cross-section of Curtin academic staff and include directors of University research institutes and centres, lead participants in CRCs and Centres of Excellence, Executive Managers and Curtin Research Fellows. The forum follows the highly successful Curtin Leaders' Forum held for heads of academic units in April.

## PUBLICATIONS

The latest edition of *Curtin Now*, the Office of R&D's news magazine is now available.

