Her ambition is to be an astronaut. And so far Beth Jens is on the right trajectory.
The big picture
Market stalls have become a regular presence on the Parkville campus. Seen here on Open Day, the farmers’ market sets up once a month, offering everything from jam to fresh produce.

WE WELCOME YOUR FEEDBACK
Email your comments to alumni-office@unimelb.edu.au Write to us at The Advancement Office, The University of Melbourne, Victoria 3010, Australia Call us on +61 3 8344 1751 For more exclusive content visit unimelb.edu.au/3010

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New ‘front door’ designed for creative collision

Science Gallery is an award-winning international initiative pioneered by Trinity College Dublin that delivers a dynamic new model for engaging those aged 15 to 25 with science. Once established, Science Gallery Melbourne will be part of the Global Science Gallery Network – a network of eight Science Gallery locations developed in partnership with leading universities in urban centres.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Glyn Davis AC says establishing a Science Gallery in Melbourne is a key pillar of the University’s engagement strategy. "Engagement is the expression of who we are and what we value as a public-spirited University," he says. "We are committed to the principle that science is the future, and a Science Gallery Melbourne will provide a whole generation of young people with science that is exciting, accessible, but also intellectually challenging." Professor Karen Day, Dean of Science, says the new venue will contribute to the vibrant and rapidly expanding innovation “ecosystem” at the University of Melbourne. “Several years per cent of the fastest-growing occupations require STEM subjects, where Australia has worrying gaps in those skills from primary to tertiary education levels. A Science Gallery Melbourne would be a powerful addition towards building Australia’s engagement and literacy in STEM subjects and in providing a creative bridge between art and science,” she says.

Michael John Gorman, CEO of Science Gallery International, says Melbourne was a natural choice for the next Science Gallery. "For Science Gallery International, Melbourne was the obvious choice for the location of the first and only planned Australian Science Gallery due to its combination of a world-class university partner in the University of Melbourne, and its vibrant scientific and artistic communities – a city designed for creative collisions between science and art,” he says.

Rose Hingcock, former Director of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, which includes the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney, has been using computer tablets to enrich their visitor experience. "Intelligent projection” technology and Natural User Interfaces are trialling new ways for animals to play.

Primates at Melbourne Zoo are getting into the swing of a new way to play.

In a world first, researchers from Zoos Victoria and the University’s Microsoft Research Centre for Social Natural User Interfaces are trialling “intelligent projection” technology to give orang-utans control over the games and applications they play to challenge their minds.

While zoos around the world, including Melbourne, have for years been using computer tablets to enrich activities for their primates, the animals can smash these devices in minutes.

The computer games, paintings and picture galleries being developed at Melbourne use projections, so the animals can use their whole bodies to activate the space. If the trial is successful, within a few years the orang-utans could be playing computer games with visitors whenever they want.

Zoos Victoria’s animal welfare specialist Sally Sherwen (BSc 2007, MSc 2010) says previous research at the zoo has shown the orang-utans are keen to engage. “They enjoyed using the tablet but we wanted to give them something more, something they can use when they choose to,” she says.

In total, 7794 students received a University of Melbourne offer, up from 7344 offers in 2015. Provost Professor Margaret Sheil says the results highlight the positive outcomes being achieved as a result of the University’s strategic planning.

“In the latest Growing Esteem statistics we made a strong commitment to increase the number of Indigenous students on campus, so these results are particularly pleasing on this front,” she says.

"Likewise, our enhanced investment in student accommodation options close to the University – such as the development in Leicester Street – is making a Melbourne offer even more attractive to interstate students.

“We’re very happy that the number of students choosing to come to Melbourne from interstate is on the rise. We can also count a record number of Chancellor’s Scholars on the offer list – 158 in total. We’re thrilled with the overall result.”

In total, more than 57,000 students received first-round offers from VTAC. As in 2015, the Bachelor of Science received first-round offers from VTAC. In total, more than 57,000 students received first-round offers from VTAC. As in 2015, the Bachelor of Science received first-round offers from VTAC. In total, more than 57,000 students received first-round offers from VTAC.

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Care rises to a new level

The needs of patients and of their families were at the heart of the building brief for the VCCC, the new home of the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, which manages the facility, and specialists from nine other research, clinical and educational institutions.

“People arrive with a diagnosis feeling stressed and anxious and sick. The whole idea is to keep them calm, make them welcome, embrace them,” says Thomas, a director with Melbourne-based Silver Thomas Hanley, healthcare architectural specialists working as partners with DesignInc and McBride Charles Ryan in imagining and realising the VCCC.

The last thing patients need is to be overwhelmed. “But at the same time the building should inspire hope and courage, and a shared belief that progress in beating the disease will come more readily if a centre of excellence is created to bring together the right people.”

That’s the mission of the comprehensive cancer centre model, borrowed from the US, where it has been operating for 40 years. It’s about the integration of research, education and clinical care, and the streamlined translation of discovery into prevention programs, diagnostic tools, bedside regimes and treatment options.

Situated at the nexus of Flemington Road, Elizabeth Street and Grattan Street, the gateway to the renowned Parkville medical and research precinct, the VCCC is “a magnificent piece of infrastructure”, says the partnership’s executive director, Professor Jim Bishop AO (MB BS 1972, MD 1990, MMed 1999).

But the structure is only part of the story. For him and others who have championed its realisation for a decade, the programs and philosophies it embodies are equally impressive, a “once in a generation” opportunity to propel cancer care into a new realm.

They set out to create a cancer centre that would rank in the world’s top 10. “And I think we stand a very good chance of getting there, based on the depth of the work,” says Bishop, who took the helm at the VCCC in 2011. He was previously Australia’s Chief Medical Officer, and has held senior posts in cancer institutes, research and education in NSW, Victoria and the US.

The VCCC aims to provide individualised treatment to patients, facilitate more clinical trials, nurture collaboration, support bench-to-bedside translation of research, and smooth the way for a seamless patient journey through the system.

It’s also explicitly designed to reach out to other institutions, with skywalks linking it to the Royal Melbourne Hospital and tunnels under the roads to plug into the supercomputing grant of the Victorian Life Sciences Computing Initiative.

“There are a couple of big revolutions washing across medicine at the moment – like genomics and bioinformatics,” says Bishop. “We’re wanting to take advantage of those developments that are transforming medicine to transform cancer treatment.”

The University of Melbourne – which contributed $25 million to the VCCC project and is the only educational institution in the partnership – has a major focus on cancer research. Bishop is also the Herman Chair of Cancer Medicine at the University.

Standing in the jaw-dropping 13-storey atrium as swarms of work crews apply finishing touches to the sculptured spiral of the “Welcome Stair”, Melina Thomas conjures up the scene come July, when the first patients find their way to the Welcome Hall.

Recognising that they may be feeling sick and fatigued, the lower floors are organised for easy navigation and proximity to clinical areas, pharmacy and pathology. There’s a wellbeing centre kitted out like an airport lounge, where patients and their families can visit, even when their treatment is finished, and sit around a kitchen table and talk about their experience, says Thomas.

Most visitors will be day patients attending for treatments and consultations that will be provided in either wide chemotherapy bays or more private spaces.

“We’ve found in our work with cancer hospitals in the past that a lot of patients like to share their experiences,” says Thomas (BPD 1991, BArch(Hons) 1993). “So in all the clinical areas our aim is to empower the patient in giving a choice between shared and private spaces.”

Designed to inspire hope: Architect Melina Thomas in the atrium of the stunning Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre. Picture: Julian Kingma

A striking new building gives Melbourne’s renowned medical and research precinct a fitting entrance. But it’s what unfolds inside the $1 billion Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre that is truly revolutionary.

By Jo Chandler

CONTINUED PAGE 8
Public zones are also engineered to bring patients into proximity with other users of the building – doctors and nurses, research scientists and technicians, medical students and educators – en route to the lifts that will take them to their laboratories and workstations. Researchers will occupy the top six floors, clinical and hospital staff dominate the bottom six. Educators are positioned in between, in a space where patients and families and staff also mingle in the cafeteria, or step down a floor to a sprawling 1400-metre-plus rooftop garden for some respite.

The mingling of these populations is orchestrated to allow patients to be brought into contact with each other, where they talk about their experiences and compare notes. It is about breaking down silos to capitalise on the central ambition shared by every patient, scientist and specialist in the building: to beat cancer.

Natural light pours into the VCCC courtesy of its hallowed core, swathes of white balconies wrapping around the light, the quirky, organic shapes taking the hard edges off what might have been a formidable construction.

**“These biophilic design elements reinforce the connection to nature, and in turn promote healing, relaxation, and comfort,” says Thomas.**

Every component of the building has been thrashed out with focus groups representing the various users – some 300 groups all vehemently championing their work, needs and priorities.

“There were formal meetings with all the doctors and nurses in every single department,” explains Thomas. Same again for the various research departments. “We go room by room, and then into the detail of the fixtures and fittings – where every power point goes. So these are quite intense meetings.”

Adding to the pressure was the recognition that there would be no similar investment in Victoria for a long time.

“The outside world is close, with patients given the best vantage points. Down in the radiation bunker there are backlit tree canopies and a light show of butterflies waiting to distract paediatric patients. There’s nothing whimsical about such devices. “These biophilic design elements reinforce the connection to nature, and in turn promote healing, relaxation, and comfort,” says Thomas.

**“We wanted to create a building which fosters this interaction.”**

For architect Melina Thomas, being part of the effort to create a facility that will touch so many lives is deeply rewarding. There has been substantial international interest in the VCCC, and encouraging feedback from medical and architectural specialists. “We’re quite overwhelmed at the buzz,” she says. “It’s creating a lot of excitement.”

But the true test will come when patients come through the doors and their carers get down to the business of healing them. Thomas will be in the wings waiting for the verdict.

**The cancer experiences researcher**

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**The molecular geneticist**

Professor Melissa Southey is the head of the Cancer Genetics Laboratory at Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre in Melbourne, and is a world-leading expert in melanoma research.

Southey conducted her early research in the field of DNA replication, but in the late 1980s she began exploring the molecular genetics of melanoma. Her work has since focused on understanding the genetic changes that occur in melanoma, and how these changes drive the growth and spread of the disease.

Southey’s research has led to the identification of several key genes that are involved in melanoma development, including the BRAF and NRAS genes. This work has provided new targets for the development of therapies to treat melanoma, and has also led to the identification of new biomarkers that can be used to detect melanoma early and monitor its progression.

Southey is currently leading a large-scale international effort to catalogue the genetic changes that occur in melanoma, and to identify new therapeutic targets. Her team is also working on developing new tests that can be used to detect melanoma in its early stages, and to predict which patients are likely to respond to different treatments.

Southey’s research has had a significant impact on the field of melanoma research, and she is widely recognised as one of the leading experts in the world. She has received numerous awards and honours for her work, and is a highly sought-after speaker at international conferences.

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Actor Pallavi Sharda has a foot in two cultural camps - her homeland Australia, and India where she passes for a local. But as she tells Val McFarlane, she still thinks like an Australian.

Her Instagram profile describes her as a “raging Aussie”, yet she’s also one of Bollywood’s leading ladies. Contradictory? Not for Pallavi Sharda, who is as at home in Melbourne as she is in Mumbai.

This cultural fluidity does confuse some. “When I speak to Australian people in Bollywood all of a sudden you just get so strong because I’m dying to speak in it,” Sharda says in her soft Australian accent. “Literally people stop and their jaws open and they’re like (adopts strong Indian accent) ‘What happened to Pallavi madam?’”

Sharda’s ability to switch between her Australian and Indian identities has helped her create a career that goes beyond her childhood dream of appearing in Bollywood films. In India, Sharda (BMedSci, Comm, LLB 2010, DipModLang(Fr) 2011) has enjoyed success in films such as Besharam and Save Your Legs. Her Australian credits include Save Your Legs with Stephen Curry. This year will see her in international productions Shambhala, opposite Jonathan Rhys Meyers, and Lion, alongside Nicole Kidman, Dev Patel and Rooney Mara.

She is also increasingly taking on the role of cultural ambassador, promoting Indian-Australian relations. She was Queen (to Shane Warne’s King) of Melbourne’s multicultural festival Moomba last year, (to Shane Warne’s King) of Melbourne’s cultural ambassador, promoting Kidman, Dev Patel and Rooney Mara.

Lion Rhys Meyers, and productions include Besharam LLB 2010, DipModLang(Fr) 2011) has her childhood dream of appearing in Bollywood, yet she’s create a career that goes beyond her Australian and Indian identities has helped her cross-cultural roots were legitimate,” she says. Her new-found confidence took her to the University of Melbourne, where she fast-tracked her studies, cramming in as many subjects as possible – while also running a course on Indian dance for her fellow students – and devised a plan to get to Bollywood as soon as she could.

“I thought that was my career. I really didn’t want to be a lawyer,” she says. “I don’t feel the need to say that I’m Australian. I still haven’t got it right because I don’t want to lose sense of the values that I grew up with because that’s what I would like to inculcate in my children one day.”

While Sharda’s career is increasingly based outside India, she is still a huge fan of the classic Bollywood genre – colourful epics packed with emotion and lavish dance routines. “A good Bollywood film allows you to escape from the real world,” says Pallavi Sharda. “It’s a constant navigation game, and I haven’t got it right because I don’t want to lose sense of the values that I grew up with because that’s what I would like to inculcate in my children one day.”

Sharda’s strict upbringing in a strict household made her more rigid about her career. “I thought that I would go to Melbourne Uni.”

But it’s actually been a bit of a drawback because people don’t realise I think like an Australian. I might be fitting into all the cultural nuances but I am a very free, uninhibited, strong Australian woman, working in an industry that is often regressive. So there’s a constant clash of values, and I find that extremely challenging.

Having grown up in egalitarian Australia, she struggles with India’s focus on caste and class. “In India you have to insert yourself into this hierarchy and even though it’s something that you don’t want to do, if you don’t do it you get walked all over,” she says.

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She says the films still offer great entertainment for Western moviegoers willing to give them a go. “When you watch an Indian cinema from a Western perspective, you are totally hooked up in the storylines,” he says.

To learn more about Indian cinema, visit pursuit.unimelb.edu.au

Follow Pallavi Sharda online: @pallavisharda

Dancing to a Bollywood beat

High energy, spontaneous dance routines and a plot that’s got everything but the kitchen sink - the perfect recipe for a classic Bollywood movie, says Luke Deverns, lecturer in screenwriting at the Victorian College of the Arts.

The storytelling formula, based on the real tradition, aims to inject nine emotional states into each tale to create a masala experience - akin to a spicy meal. And audiences find it irresistible. The Indian film industry (Bollywood) is just that part based in Mumbai; formerly Bombay; other major cities have their own industries is huge. India produces more movies than Hollywood and in 2013, nearly 2.7 billion cinema tickets were sold across the country.

Indian movies really took off when sound films (“talkies”) rose to prominence in the West in the 1930s. In particular, Indian filmmakers saw parallels between the Western musical and their own performance tradition - and the all-singing, all-dancing classic. Indian movie style was born.

Today, the tone of Indian films is changing to reflect contemporary Indian culture. Movies (although still very grand) are a little more grounded, and while music is still a crucial part of the soundtrack, characters are far less likely to suddenly burst into song. Yet the rhythm of the stories remains. Deverns says the films still offer great entertainment for Western moviegoers willing to give them a go. “When you watch an Indian cinema from a Western perspective, you are totally hooked up in the storylines,” he says.
A POWER IMBALANCE

With Australia sliding steadily down the world ranks of female political representation, a new University program is preparing to light the path for aspiring women politicians. Gay Alcorn reports.

Cathy McGowan AO became a politician when she was nearly 60. But the independent member for Indi was hardly a political novice when she won the north-eastern Victorian seat in 2013. She had spent much of her adult life in politics of one sort or another, especially as founding member and later president of Women in Agriculture – lobbying, networking, pushing to get things done.

McGowan (DipEd 1976), now 62, has some advice for women thinking seriously about a political career: you’ve got to learn the skills, preferably before you stand as a candidate. And even before that, you’ve got to work out what you really care about.

“The first thing I’d want to say is you’ve got to work out yourself what your platform is,” she says. “There’s not much point unless you’ve got a bit of vision about what you’ve got to say and that takes a lot of work to refine.

“I’m a huge believer in people explaining what the pathway is, because it’s so rarely obvious and it’s not intuitive.”

The University of Melbourne’s Pathways to Politics program is designed to “explain what the pathway is” for women considering a political career. A pilot begins in June, and is a first for an Australian university.

The idea came from philanthropist Carol Schwartz AM, who in turn was inspired by a Harvard Kennedy School program, From Harvard Square to the Oval Office. It offers selected graduates hands-on, practical training and networking. Past speakers include presidential hopeful Hillary Clinton and former Republican governor Christie Todd Whitman.

The aim of Pathways to Politics is simple: increase female representation in local, state and federal politics. The reason is obvious: while the “gender gap” in such areas as education and health has been largely closed in Australia, we are slipping behind other nations in female political representation.

In 2013, a comparison of women in national parliaments ranked Australia 44th (behind countries such as Cuba, Sweden, South Africa, Mexico and New Zealand). We had slipped from 32nd in 2011 found that women comprised nearly 28 per cent of local government councillors in 2011 found with almost 33 per cent in Victoria and a high of more than 41 per cent in the ACT. A survey of local government councillors in 2011 found that women comprised nearly 28 per cent of elected representatives.

Launching the Pathways to Politics program late last year, Foreign Minister Julie Bishop pointed out the positives. Australia has had a female prime minister, a female governor-general, and now has its first female defence and foreign ministers. Many states, too, have had female leaders. Queensland Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk has a female deputy leader, Jackie Trad, and women make up more than half her cabinet.

“It’s important for women to fulfil these leadership roles because unless others see a woman in that role they don’t imagine that it’s possible,” Bishop said.

The first Pathways to Politics course will be open only to University of Melbourne graduates, although this is expected to change over time, and will be run through the University’s School of Government.

A cohort of 20 to 25 women from all political leanings will receive, free of charge, 12 fortnightly sessions of intensive training and discussion.

At each session, a female politician will speak – off the record – and answer questions over dinner. Then someone with detailed knowledge of the political process – campaigning, polling, speech making and negotiating the media – will speak and give advice.

One of those will be Nicholas Reece, senior adviser to prime minister Julia Gillard (LLB 1986, BA 1989) and was Labor’s campaign director for the 2010 Victorian election.

“There is something systemically that makes it harder for women,” says Reece. “My personal political experience having worked for the first female prime minister was that I saw firsthand the gender lens that was put across a lot of things that she was engaged in.”
POLITICS

FROM PAGE 13

Gillard herself famously said when she lost the leadership to Kevin Rudd: “The reaction to being the first female prime minister does not explain everything about my prime ministership, nor does it explain nothing about my prime ministership.”

One of Gillard’s challenges, Reece says, was that female politicians “could be either Margaret Thatcher the Iron Lady or you could be the girl next door, and they were the two archetypes you could choose from as a female politician. That’s just bullshit. There are just as many diverse characters who are women.

“Often there’s an underlying assumption that women shouldn’t consider a career in politics until they have children, or have raised their children. If you follow that logic through, women wouldn’t enter the political system until well into their 40s or 50s, but to get ahead in politics you need to enter a parliamentary role in a relatively early stage in your career so you can do your time and be promoted to senior roles.”

Male-dominated preselection processes also disadvantage women, but they have to learn to push themselves forward, says Reece.

“Women are often not as forward in these things and in a highly competitive area that is full of these overachieving hyper-ambitious types, they can just get pushed out.”

Pathways to Politics is non-partisan, and is looking for women of all ages from any political background. Yet it is undeniable that the conservative side of politics has struggled with this issue more than Labor and the Greens.

“So let this conference declare, by 2025 – 50 per cent of Liberal’s representatives will be women,” Labor leader Bill Shorten told the party’s national conference last year. Labor’s affirmative action rules were adopted in 1994 when women comprised 50 per cent of Labor’s representatives and 50 per cent of National MPs.

I do not believe that (the increase in women MPs) would gradually increase over time. But when Tony Abbott’s first Cabinet after the 2013 election included just one woman – Julie Bishop – it was a wake-up call that waiting for things to change was not working.

A step into the heavens

Beth Jens had to plot a circuitous route into space. A newly launched University program should make it easier for the next generation of students.

BY TIM THWAITES
(BCS(HONS) 1974, TRINITY COLLEGE, JANET CLARKE HALL)

Following her dreams, Dr Beth Jens may well end up going as far as is humanly possible – deep into outer space. It’s an adventure the young engineer from Torquay has been chasing since she decided at the age of 12 to become an astronaut. And she’s certainly given herself a good chance to fulfil that ambition.

Dr Jens (BEng(MechEng)(Hons), BSc 2008) is now employed at Caltech’s famous Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in Pasadena, California – the place where the Mars rovers and much of NASA’s rocket technology were developed. She is working on new ways of fuelling small space vehicles.

Getting this far has taken a lot of hard work, a fair dollop of serendipity and that splash of ambition.

“I love space exploration,” she says. “When I was young, one of the Apollo astronauts was out in Australia. Dad happened to sit beside him on an internal flight, and he invited us to his talk in Geelong. He showed pictures of standing on the moon. And I thought, ‘Why couldn’t anyone who was passionate and worked hard get there?’ I think that started it.

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"I was very single-minded about being an astronaut, and I would do anything to get there. Now, I just love the idea of helping support the space effort, whether that’s as an engineer or going into space. But I’d still like to be an astronaut!"

When she was a young student in the 1990s, no one laughed at Jens’ ambition to go into space. Her school, Sacred Heart College in Geelong, and especially her physics and maths teachers, encouraged her. Yet she admits there was a little good-natured bewilderment on the part of the careers teacher, who then did her best to find Jens a relevant placement, at a flying school in Essendon.

When Jens went on to the University of Melbourne, it was natural to enrol in a physics degree, but she also decided to take on engineering, partly because she knew Australian-only astronaut, Andrew Thomas, was an engineer. Despite the fact that her elder brother was also in engineering, her parents needed a little reassurance. “Mum was a little confused at first. ‘Are you sure it’s a respectable career?’ she asked me.”

Even so, Jens suffered a little from culture shock. No space or aeronautical engineering subjects were offered at the University, so she opted for mechanical engineering and found herself in a class of young men who had been pulling cap apart since they were kids.

When asked in a programming course what languages she had, it took her a moment to recognise it was computer languages that her lecturers were interested in rather than her experience of Japanese.

In recalling her journey into the field, Jens says it helped a lot to be living on campus in Newman College with the access that gave her to the university experience and to sports. With help from Professor Ivan Marusic, she even managed to conjure up a final-year research project on the prospect of powering space probes on Mars and Venus using wind energy.

Not only was she awarded first class honours, she was also selected to present at an international conference on that topic. She was building up a network of contacts in the space industry and assisting communication.

When she first came to Stanford to do a PhD, she was a little concerned I might be behind the other students,” says Jens. “But it soon became clear that the skill set in maths and physics that the University of Melbourne had provided was very applicable – a very strong, sound theoretical basis.”

In 2017, Jens and three engineering mates thought 18 months ago, several months after receiving an email from the Director of the Centre for Neural Engineering, Professor Stan Skafidas (BE(ElecEng) 1992, BSc 1993, MEngSc 1996, PhD 1998). The message invited them to a meeting open to anyone interested in building a cube satellite to be launched in 2018.

The four students saw the project as a way to develop useful expertise in a field critical to Australia’s future in areas such as land management and emergency response. So they wrote back proposing that they manage the project and, instead of just one satellite, that plans be drawn up for a series of launches, starting with a simple prototype in 2017.

Coincidentally, 50 years earlier a group of students at the University of Melbourne had established the first Australian satellite, the Australis Oscar 5, which was built in Australia. The Australis Oscar 5, or AO5, was completed in 1967 and launched into orbit by a US Air Force rocket in 1970. In the 45 years since then, no Australian university has repeated this.

Now the gravitational wave announcement has changed everything. "Up till now LIGO has been more or less a physics experiment, to make that first detection and prove Einstein was right," Melatos says. "But now the astronomy begins. What we expect is that over the next five to 10 years the detectors will dramatically improve in sensitivity and we will see more and more things, perhaps even neutron stars."

Melatos is one of a highly rated group of astrophysicists at the University who combine theory with practical experimentation. Many of them are at the forefront of research into one of the great unknown periods of cosmic history, a dark age known as the Epoch of Reionisation when the first stars and galaxies formed.

During that time no light or other form of electromagnetic radiation was generated – at least that we can analyse directly. So we have to rely on other means of acquiring information.

Researchers in the School of Physics are using today’s most powerful astronomical instruments to plug that information gap and ask questions that are shaping the design of the next generation of instruments.

"We’re trying to answer fundamental curiosity-driven questions, such as how did the universe come into being and indirectly, what are the conditions for life?" says astrophysicist Professor Rachael Webster, a member of the science working group for what will be the world’s largest radio telescope, the Square Kilometre Array, part of which is to be built in Western Australia.
I became bulimic when I was 15. I didn’t tell anyone. I suffered in silence. When I was 22 I went to a psychologist. By then I was studying a PhD in psychology and had learnt that we can use psychological interventions to change negative emotions and thoughts. I overcame the eating disorder, but what followed was a decade of intermittent anxiety and depression. Again, I worked hard to overcome my negative thoughts and feelings and, thankfully, came to a point where I could cope with my illness.

But the absence of illness did not make me happy. It just made me more human. I was no longer ill. I was in a kind of psychological limbo – neither unhappy nor happy. Psychologically speaking, I needed to get to zero of x. I needed to find psychological exercises to increase my positive emotions and thoughts (not just reduce my negative emotions and thoughts).

It was around that time (1998) that Professor Martin Seligman, then president of the American Psychological Association, introduced the simple yet profound idea that psychologists should try to help people build positive states and psychological strengths as well as fixing their negative states and psychological limitations. The field of positive psychology has grown as study after study reveals how positive psychological interventions can increase positive emotions and thoughts.

According to a two-decade-long study conducted by researchers at the University of California, San Diego, happiness is contagious. We catch positive emotions off others in our online communities. According to a two-decade-long study conducted by researchers at the University of California, San Diego, happiness is contagious.

The path to happiness is best achieved when we maximise our strengths and your flaws and weaknesses will get a disproportionate amount of attention. Yet science clearly shows that correcting weaknesses takes us only so far on the journey to reaching our potential and that doing more of what we do best opens up the most effective pathways to success and happiness.

This doesn’t mean we should ignore our weaknesses or problems. It just means we need to see fixing them for what it is – remediation. Sure, fixing weakness is necessary, but the path to happiness is best achieved when we learn how to maximise our strengths. Positive psychology moves us from remediation to transformation.

Strengths can be many things, including your character, talents, aptitudes, ability and skills. The strength-based approach is gaining momentum in research and practice.

At the Centre for Positive Psychology, we are conducting research with students, teachers, education systems, parents, employees and workplaces to understand what makes wellbeing in young people and adults alike.

For example, school students who are taught psychological skills report increases in hope, resilience and serenity as well as reductions in stress, anxiety and depression. In positive psychology classes, students learn a range of exercises they can use to increase their positive emotions and thoughts. They learn how to notice and savour the good moments, they learn about the importance of realistic self-talk and they learn how to cultivate supportive relationships.

One fascinating study, researchers at the Centre found that positive psychology lessons literally get “under the skin” of a student in the best kind of way by reducing levels of the stress hormone.

The benefits of positive psychology for young people go beyond the school grounds and can make a big difference in their family lives. My own research shows that teenagers are better equipped to weather the challenges of adolescence if they have parents who adopt a strength-based approach. When a parent sees and cultivates their son or daughter’s strengths – for example, humour, relationship skills, intellect or sporting ability – this helps build their teen’s confidence and overall happiness.

I’ve found similar results with younger children who are more likely to use their strengths to cope with stress if they have parents who adopt a strength-based approach. This is the approach I use with my own son and daughter.

But positive psychology isn’t just for the young. Strength-based parenting also improves life satisfaction and confidence in the parents. And strength-based approaches improve the wellbeing of adults in the workplace. In a series of studies conducted at the Centre for Positive Psychology we have shown that positive psychology approaches and wellbeing are significantly related to job satisfaction, work happiness, professional thriving, work contentment and work enthusiasm across a range of industries.

In one study, we asked organisational leaders to adopt gratitude practices for one month. They kept a gratitude journal in which they recorded three things each day that they felt thankful for at work. They used gratitude in staff meetings, on bulletin boards and in newsletters. They wrote letters of thanks to chosen colleagues.

Gratitude is an emotion that puts stress into perspective and is a form of relationship glue. So it’s no wonder that, at the end of the month-long study, the leaders reported that it was easier to see the bigger picture at work and that they better appreciated the value of work relationships. Leaders also said that integrating gratitude into their work roles had brought them happiness.

Beyond the physical settings of school, home and work, positive psychology plays a role in virtual spaces. A big-data study comprising a research team from University of Pennsylvania, Northwestern University and the Centre for Positive Psychology found an association between the language we use on social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, and atherosclerotic heart disease mortality.

You guessed it – use of negative words (such as hate, sick of, bored, grey) were associated with increased rates of heart attack, while use of positive words (such as strength, opportunities, hope, fantastic) were associated with lower rates. What’s more, language use was a better indicator of atherosclerotic heart disease mortality than 10 other common predictors used by researchers, including gender, socioeconomic status and health behaviours. This was a big-data study and was done at the population level of analysis, but it makes you think about how you express yourself on your own social media accounts, doesn’t it?

I recently gave a TEDx talk (bit.ly/1t9Acdf) where I spoke about how we can use social media to boost our moods and spread happiness to others. There’s now a veritable swathe of research on how moods and emotions spread through online social networks. According to a two-decade-long study conducted by researchers at the University of California, San Diego, happiness is contagious.

We catch positive emotions off others in our online communities. Positive emotions don’t just synchronise, they also spread. University of California researchers tracked the emotional content of posts generated by a large sample of online platform users over three years and found each post expressing a positive or negative emotion caused friends to generate one to two additional posts expressing the same emotion. What’s more, these positive posts then spread through social networks up to by three degrees of separation.

One positive post, you can brighten the day of someone you never meet. Happiness begets happiness.

At its core, a strength-based approach is about bolstering the positive qualities, positive states and positive processes that support your wellbeing and optimal functioning.

In other words, it’s about cultivating the health and mental and physical skills that support our strengths to the fore and helps us all steer north of zero. It can set off a positive ripple effect across society, allowing us to collectively access our deep wells of strength and use our best resources to positively shape future generations.

The path to happiness is best achieved when we maximise our strengths. The field has offered new ways to unlock our wellbeing and potential. The field has grown by a whopping 290 per cent and has been used successfully in families, classrooms, social work teams, psychology clinics and workplaces across the globe.

The path to happiness is best achieved when we maximise our strengths. The path to happiness is best achieved when we maximise our strengths. The path to happiness is best achieved when we maximise our strengths. The path to happiness is best achieved when we maximise our strengths. The path to happiness is best achieved when we maximise our strengths.

How a positive ripple can shape our lives
Telling stories for the Martians

Anna Funder’s award-winning books are vividly grounded in time, place and historical fact, which makes her return to Australia to write a new novel a fascinating prospect.

By Luke Slattery (BA(Hons) 1983)

Anna Funder walks with a languid grace into a café with an industrial air – plain tables and raw concrete surfaces. Outside the heat is fierce and the light harsh yet Funder, slender, pale and the very model of sangfroid, is her own microclimate.

Last year the 49-year-old, Melbourne-born writer returned to Australia after nearly four years in New York with architect husband Craig Allchin (Arch 1989), three young children at serious risk of becoming precociously Americanised, and 16 cases of luggage.

Allchin had continued to work in Sydney during their time in the US – “a long commute”, says Funder, with a slight curl of the lip and a generous dose of irony. This year she starts work at Sydney’s University of Technology, from which she has a doctorate in creative writing, in an honorary role that allows her freedom to write without the shackles of a heavy teaching load.

Family seems to have been the chief motivation for her return. “So many things become clear only when you do them,” she says as her gaze falls to the white table top, “and for someone who works with their imagination I’m bad at imagining what they might be like. In time we realised that we would always be foreigners if we stayed in America. We would always be at one remove from the society, and at one remove from our children who are absolutely a part of that culture.”

But the move feels good. Funder (BA(Hons) 1991, LLB(Hons) 1999, MA (Creative Writing) 2002) spent the first month walking around Sydney taking photographs. “It was so beautiful”, she laughs, seemingly embarrassed at the pure simplicity of the emotion. “Australia is a fantastic country.”

In place of America’s excitement and intrigue, there is the quietude of her new home. “I’m in a confident place to write from, a place I know.” But in a tacit admission that she might not know the place well enough, she is reading about early colonial Sydney when we meet, and excited by the story.

Arriving at her family home from the airport her father, renowned medical researcher Professor John Funder AC (BA 1964, MB BS 1965, PhD 1970, MD 1971, DMedSc 2013, Newman College, International House), offered the Punjab taxi driver a tip. “He didn’t want that spare change,” she recalls. “It was like, ‘This is Australia. We’re all equal. I don’t want your loose change. I have my own dignity and I don’t need it. And I like that!’”

There is a remarkable – almost fantastical – quality to Funder’s writing life: it seems to have come out of nowhere. There was no obvious apprenticeship. She emerged fully formed, like Athena from the head of Zeus.

Armed with her University of Melbourne degrees and a gift for languages – she is fluent in French, which she learnt at school in France from the age of six, and German – Funder had pursued a Europe-based career in human rights law. It was while working in Berlin in the mid-1990s for Deutsche Welle TV that she started researching what would become Stasiland.

First published in 2002, after earning Funder a Mediterranean fellowship at the University of Melbourne, the book is a driven, almost journalistic (in the best sense of that word) inquiry into the remnants of the German Democratic Republic’s ubiquitous security apparatus, the Stasi, and its victims. In some ways it might have been a rather grim investigation, yet Funder’s prose is warmed by human sensitivity, humour, and a writer’s capacity to see the world aslant.

Stasiland won the Samuel Johnson Prize for non-fiction, the British equivalent of a Pulitzer. Her next book, All That I Am, is a novel similarly concerned with the victims of a German-speaking security apparatus, only this time the events that send a depth charge through the story take place against the backdrop of Hitler’s rise to power, and the human drama is focused by the white magic of imagination.

Stasiland is a true story animated by novelistic craft; All That I Am, which went on to win the Miles Franklin, is a novel nourished by a quest for truth. She continued to work this fictional seam in The Girl with the Dogs, a quiet, lapidary novella published last year, a riff on Chkhlov’s masterful The Lady with the Dog.

Why did she turn, after the gloriously audacious Stasiland, to the high-wire act of fiction? “I started to write Stasiland as a novel and a terrible novel – just execrable in its own right – but my problem was the form wasn’t meeting the content”, she explains. “I was living in Germany and would talk to people living in Berlin and they were all alive. People who had resisted the Stasi and people who had been part of the Stasi were living around streets together and in a supermarket queue together.”

“Stylistic choices are ultimately moral choices and it seemed inappropriate to try to inhabit someone’s head rather than let them speak for themselves. It had to be non-fictional but I had to put it together in a string of pearls form and the glue of the story was what it was like to live in Berlin at that time.”

“With All That I Am everybody is dead. The central mystery is probably, I think, an outrageous injustice and the only thing I did was to bring the characters back to life. The suspense of the book is what happens to them. But it’s part of it is a rewriting of history. It is trying to tell a truth that history has tried to cover up, or refused to tell.”

“Both of these stories are interventions in history – I don’t mean this in a grandiose way – but the form was dictated by those factors, by what I was trying to express.”

She has returned home to a life unencumbered by the awkwardness of exile – an easier life where she has to worry less about the kids – and to serious work on both a novel and some long-form non-fiction pieces.

She doesn’t want to talk about the novel before it’s set down. Writers rarely do. But for Funder it’s not a case of creative superstition so much as a concern that casual verbalisations might block off narrative paths.

“Fiction is an exploratory process,” she says. “If I say what it’s about I’ve made a synaptic path. I don’t want to make it harder for myself.”

She invites her to step into an alternative reality and consider what life might have been like if Stasiland had not steamrollered its way into best-seller lists and human rights law had instead been her true vocation: what causes would she most likely fight for?

She declines, politely, the invitation to improvise. “There’s just no point, when she once wanted to be a writer.”

“From the age of six I was so fascinated with language and what it could do and how the world looked different in French from in English and the power of that. It wasn’t even so much perhaps that I wanted to be one, it was that I couldn’t imagine being or doing anything else. Now, of course, I’m not competent to do anything else. If I ever was. I think I would have actually harmed anyone if I’d continued as an international lawyer for the Australian government, but still. What I’m really interested in is exploring what it is to be human, in case the Martians ever come down and want reading material!”
A tiny device that captures the brain’s electrical signals may be about to transform medicine

BY GARRY BARKER

Scientists at the University of Melbourne, Royal Melbourne Hospital and Florey Institute for Neuroscience and Mental Health have found the holy grail of bionic research.

They have developed technology to closely monitor, record and interpret thoughts and use them to control a bionic limb, or even a vehicle, without opening the skull or implanting sensors directly on the brain. It has been dubbed the “bionic spine”.

It is a world first in biomedical engineering that uses electrodes on a tiny stent, called a stentrode, inserted through the jugular vein to lie beside the brain.

The electrodes pick up the tiny microvolt electrical signals generated in brain neurons. Trials so far have been on sheep, whose thoughts are unknown, but when clinical trials begin with humans next year, their thoughts will be known, detected, recorded, interpreted and sent to a computer via a radio transmitter implanted under the skin of the chest.

A remarkable device

Algorithms running in the computer will interpret those signals and send instructions to a bionic limb or vehicle to help disabled people with spinal cord damage, even motor neuron disease. But the Melbourne researchers see great potential for other fields, including amelioration of Parkinson’s disease, prediction and control of epileptic seizures and treatment of severe depression.

Professor David Grayden (BE(ElecEng) (Hons) 1980, BSc 1991, PhD 1999) is a team leader in the group of 40 medical and bioengineering specialists working on the project. Professor Grayden (left) and his team are charged with identifying, recording and interpreting brain signals collected by the stentrode and with building the algorithms to instruct an external device.

He is Professor and Deputy Head (Academic) of the Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering.

Recording signals from the brain is now fairly common in modern medicine. What makes your research different?

It is a byproduct of the way neurons behave in activating and communicating with each other that they create electrical fields. It was discovered many years ago that you could record those fields and make sense of them. That’s how EEG (electroencephalography) developed. But we want to record those tiny electrical fields over very small areas in the brain and infer from them what the neurons are doing.

So, if you are sending an instruction to “lift your leg” there will be a sequence of activations of those neurons that send commands down to the spinal cord and then to the legs saying “activate that muscle or this muscle”.

So it’s finding out what the voltage changes mean and then creating appropriate instructions to a bionic device?

Yes. We can use different techniques such as EEG, MEG (magnetoencephalogram), which measures magnetic fields in the brain, and MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) to look at brain activation as people imagine actions.

With the stentrode we can look at a signal picked up by a single electrode, see the characteristics of it and, if certain frequencies become activated, then that means something is happening and we can decode that.

Another way is to look at what the relative activity is between multiple electrodes. There may be a number of instructions or we can target where the signal is coming from, just as multiple microphones on a submarine can detect the position of a sound source.

We would say to someone, “imagine raising your arm”, they imagine it, we record the signal and then we say “lower your arm” and we get hopefully a different signal. We can analyse that directly or, a common approach now, feed it into a machine-learning algorithm in a computer to decipher it. From that we can set up templates of what different actions like. Machine learning is very helpful but it needs to adapt over time because people adapt the way they do their thinking.

There is an interaction - you have machine learning to decode the patient’s activity but the patient is also learning how best to work with the system.

Such learning happening from both angles is more likely to make the system work.

And the goals of your team? What about other applications?

Success depends largely on our ability to communicate with the machine, the computer that converts the signals from the brain neurons into instructions that replicate and transmit the intent in the thoughts of the patient. You can put electrodes into the brain, but if you can’t make sense of the signals being recorded, then there’s not much point.

The idea of using a stent came from Tom Oxley (a neurologist from the University of Melbourne interested in vascular systems and electrophysiology). Tom was looking for support for his idea.

Professor Terry O’Brien (MB BS 1988, MD 2000), head of medicine at the Royal Melbourne Hospital, suggested he speak to Professor Tony Burkitt and me. We were at the Centre for Neural Engineering at the time. We thought the idea was fantastic and agreed to support it.

We immediately saw what the challenges were and were familiar enough with the bionic eye and ear to know the sorts of challenges that would be met, such as finding biocompatible materials and working in very small spaces.

Tom had been speaking to DARPA (the US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency) and we joined in with a formal application for funding, which was successful.

It might be possible to record from other parts of the brain, perhaps use it for epilepsy monitoring. I am also interested in the prospect of stimulating the brain through the stentrode’s electrodes. Could we deliver electric current to the brain to stop a seizure, treat severe intractable depression or stimulate centres for control of Parkinson’s disease?

An implanted device to treat Parkinson’s disease is already available but its use involves invasive surgery with all the inherent risks of entering the brain.

Electrical stimulation delivered there can alleviate some of the symptoms of Parkinson’s. Severe shaking and “freezing”, when the patient can’t move, are treatable.

Read more on Pursuit bit.ly/1V0i6rK

Brain wave: The stentrode that may transform the lives of millions.
Coming back as a mentor I feel welcomed, like part of a family. What do I get out of it? In a word, happiness.

When you get to my age you find you’ve done a lot, but essentially my life’s work has been the criminal justice system. I’ve been a teacher in maximum-security prisons, and for the last 17 years I have volunteered as an independent prison visitor. Now I’m in the education team at the Supreme Court in Melbourne. I realise the importance of people gaining a thorough understanding of the legal system. It’s not Judge Judy in court, it really isn’t.

I’ve also been a corporate consultant, restructuring companies that are on the brink of going into administration. I’ve always had empathy and understanding for the underdog and what I’ve experienced in the corporate world has given me additional empathy into the ramifications of decision-making from a lofty position.

I was Googling something at the University and I came across the mentoring program and I thought, why not? I believe this country has been very good to me so it’s good to do these volunteer roles and give a bit back.

My academic skills are hardly anything to write home about. Maheshi would run academic rings round me. But more important for mentors is a sense of worldliness, an understanding of what the world is about.

Maheshi and I don’t have set times to meet – the flexibility of the program is really quite important to both of us. We have a coffee together and I’ve also taken her to the Supreme Court. I think Maheshi was overawed by the extreme formality, the rules. She would like to volunteer with me but she said she’s not ready yet – and that’s fine. When she does she’ll be much better appraised of what’s actually involved.

For me, learning never stops. I do say to Maheshi, keep your mind open. Even if at this point in your life you are thinking of being a criminal barrister, the law has many other applications. Don’t think you’ve failed if you decide it doesn’t suit you. The days of doing one thing all your life are gone. Every few years, reinvent yourself, reinvent the manner in which you do things and go into new fields.

My own experience at the University of Melbourne was fantastic. I loved it. Coming back as a mentor I feel welcomed, like part of a family. What do I get out of it? In a word, happiness. I love learning and that someone like Maheshi wants to learn.
Coffee king’s caffeine buzz

Dissatisfied with campus fare, Salvatore Malatesta did something about it. Now he has a coffee empire and is exporting Melbourne’s cafe culture to the world. By Jeni Port

I f you go back to where it all started, it was probably the frozen dam sims that did Salvatore Malatesta’s young head in. Wrinkly, sad and pale, and with a filling of indeterminable origin, they were simply unappealing to a lad bought up by restaurant-owning parents.

It was food like this on the University campus in the early 1990s that drove Malatesta and his friends to the cafes, trattorias and bars of neighbouring Carlton. “There was a myth that all students were poor, or all students weren’t willing to spend money on food,” he says. “I was in a faculty where students had a disposable income and were willing to spend it.”

They also had an interest in food, that young Malatesta (LLB(Hons) 1998, BA 2002) decided to test. He opened a cafe, Caffeine, on campus and with a dose of Italian bris - not to mention good espresso – offered an alternative to standard takeaway fare. And that’s when and where his coffee addiction took root.

Salvatore Malatesta – Sal to most – is a Melbourne institution, fast thinking, faster talking, solid in build and with a laid-back fashion sense that allows for an ever-changing array of hats. “I thought, Wow! All this stuff I know about coffee, I know nothing!”

“It’s an Australian strength that St. Ali appreciates; that smooth velvet that brings out the taste in the coffee.”

“I knew then that I was on to something. No one was going to put up with bad coffee, no one was going to put up with blends anymore. It wasn’t about brands, it was about us being custodians for the farmers’ work, it was about us celebrating the subtle characteristics of single-origin, single-estate microlots.”

It was a clarion call. In 2010 he branched out, heading to London to establish St. Ali (it changed to Workshop Coffee after he fell out with his business partners) in a former nightclub.

Today, he has four outlets in the city and has set a course for world expansion. Following St. Ali pop ups in Milan, Jakarta and Seoul last year, Malatesta announced plans to have a permanent presence in Jakarta, in partnership with Indonesia’s Common Ground Roastery. Bali is due to get its own St. Ali this year.

The reasoning behind the expansion is simple: “Indonesians drink coffee all the time.” Specialty coffee would be new to them but he was encouraged by their enthusiasm to know more, something brought home after St. Ali held masterclasses in Jakarta during the World Barista Championships some years ago. With admission costing up to $200 a head, classes still sold out.

Malatesta is now ready for coffee’s next wave, which will be about improving brewing technology and the science that lies behind creating the perfect espresso.

It begins with the main ingredient – water. Minerals in water can hold the key to higher extraction rates, so his researchers (he has three) are using reverse osmosis purifier technology to determine the most desirable composition of water in coffee making.

Water temperature is also being studied, along with the quality of the coffee grinder. “We’re doing some funky stuff at the moment,” he says, adding it’s a bit of a secret. Trademarks and patents are involved. But then he proceeds to divulge a tantalising taste of what’s to come.

“I don’t know if you know anything about brakes on a race car but they are made out of porcelain so they don’t heat.”

We’re doing the same thing with grinder blades. “We make them out of porcelain so when they grind coffee the blades don’t heat and spoil the coffee.”

These grinders are being developed with mass sales in mind. And they are just some of the ideas being explored by “director of education”, young Melbourne barrista Matt Perger – a former Australian Barista Champion and World Brewer’s Cup Champion – who is Malatesta’s business partner in Sensory Lab.

“I feel like we own the collective coffee brains trust in Australia,” says Malatesta. “We are getting closer and closer to an exact science.”

Malatesta at his St. Ali cafe in South Melbourne. “I feel like we own the collective coffee brains trust in Australia.”
He's become one of Australia's most celebrated landscape gardeners, and one of Burnley's most famous graduates. So what drives Paul Bangay? By Muriel Reddy

Paul Bangay steps back in time as he visits the fabled gardens at Burnley. For several exquisite minutes, he is that young, precociously talented student who spent hours working in the gardens, eating under the giant oak tree, and studying horticulture in the art deco buildings. The unfolding of old memories makes him smile.

In the 30 years since those days of promise at Burnley, Bangay (BAppSc(Hort) 1985) has grown into one of Australia's most famous graduates. He's become one of Australia's most celebrated landscape gardeners, and one of Burnley's most celebrated landscape gardeners. He probably got his first taste of design from his mother, Annette. She was forever reworking the family garden in suburban Vermont while her eldest son was exploring the garden in suburban Vermont.

In the early days, he was obsessed with formal gardens of his era, the designer of choice for a who's who of Australia and beyond. He carries his fame lightly but reflects, even a little wistfully. "I think I always dreamed big and it was probably because of that plot," he recalls. "The garden was huge and it had a big orchard, big paddocks and a big lake. Everything was big and I think that's where I got my sense of scale from."

He devoured books on gardening, inspired by the works of Gertrude Jekyll and Sir Edward Lutyens, which he borrowed from the local library. "They ignited a huge passion in me," he remembers. "I'm sure if I grew up with native Australian plant books, it might have been a different story. But I grew up with these books and looked at those images and just dreamt of them all the time."

In time, he would go on to write his own books – *The Enchanted Garden* and *Paul Bangay's Guide to Plants*, to name just a couple – and to design bold and beautiful gardens. But in the beginning there was just the dream and the determination to do justice to his gift. He enrolled at Burnley at the insistence of his father, Robert, an academic who put a premium on education. And he loved it. These were the golden days of John Patrick and his Mount Macedon property. On a trip to England, Bangay met David Hicks, arguably the greatest garden designer of the 20th century who, like O'Neill, would become a friend and mentor. "I looked at this garden and it was so masculine and strong and stylish. And that blew me away," he says.

Bangay's career began in a small nursery that he opened in Hawksburn Village. Call it naivety or nonchalance, but he had neither a business plan nor a care. "You just thought of things and made them happen. Now it's so hard to make things happen but back then it just seemed a lot easier. I think that's probably just old age," he quips. In truth, his styles are adapted to the different climates and scales he works within.

Bangay's style has evolved subtly yet significantly over the years. Where his gardens were once very formal, very green and very clipped, they are now softer. "I think that's probably just old age," he quips. In truth, his styles are adapted to the different climates and scales he works within.

In the early days, he was obsessed with formality and the green colour palette. Time and experience have broadened his horizons. "I like it softer now, more organic. I'm still the same in terms of symmetry and balance but generally it's a lot softer. My plant repertoire is a lot broader and includes a lot more flowers and a lot more colours."

"It was probably slave labour, but that's why the gardens looked so good back then."

Paul Bangay, pictured in the gardens at Burnley. Picture: Chris Hopkins
A pruning class in the 1940s. Inset: Students with the campus draught horses in the 1920s.

BURNLEY: A POTTED HISTORY

A program of events will mark the 125th anniversary of the Burnley Campus, part of the University of Melbourne’s School of Ecosystem and Forest Sciences. It’s a fitting nod to an institution that has taught generations of students through all those years of continuous horticultural education, a record unmatched anywhere in the world.

And while the 13-hectare campus in Richmond—about seven kilometres from the heart of Melbourne—may have its roots in the 19th century, it’s also proving to be a trailblazer of the 21st. It is now recognised internationally for its growing profile in green infrastructure research and development. "In terms of world standing in higher and further education, you need research to define who you are," says John Rayner, a senior lecturer in urban horticulture. "Much like in medicine and architecture, horticulture needs a vibrant research culture to underpin it."

"A good university is built around its rich history. It has a roll of alumni its growing profile in internationally for that includes the great Edna Walling. But he’s keenly aware of how fortunate he has been professionally. "I’m blessed that I get really good clients with big budgets. I’m really blessed because that gives you a lot of freedom. I would find it very hard to have my wings clipped by an inadequate budget so in that respect, I’m very lucky."

But he’s also a worrier. He worries about running a business, about his employees and about the myriad projects he has on the go at any one time. He’s a furtif sleeper who harnesses his own nervous energy. Time and experience have lifted his sense of who he is. "When I first started off, I was really influenced by European gardens. As you become confident and settle into your own self and your own style, you don’t rely on them any more. You don’t look at gardens over there and go, we need to copy that detail or do that. Now it comes naturally to you because you have become comfortable with yourself."

"The confidence of working for a long time naturally makes your style evolve. And it has softened, definitely softened. Time has left its mark on Burnley, too. To his eye, the gardens aren’t quite as pristine as he remembers them. "But they’re still beautiful. They’re magnificent."

BURNSLEY: A POTTED HISTORY

A program of events will mark the 125th anniversary of the Burnley Campus, part of the University of Melbourne’s School of Ecosystem and Forest Sciences. It’s a fitting nod to an institution that has taught generations of students through all those years of continuous horticultural education, a record unmatched anywhere in the world.

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On a mission in Ulaanbaatar

LYNETTE PHUONG (MPH 2014)

She is passionate about helping people around the world eat and live better, but Lynette Phuong has learnt that being a health advocate can be demanding.

The self-described nutrition “nerd” moved to Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, last year as a public health officer with Australian Volunteers for International Development. It was a huge transition. Mongolians have high rates of smoking and alcohol consumption, putting them at risk of diseases like cancer and diabetes.

“It’s a good place to be if you love junk food. If you’re after a Snickers bar, it’s so cheap,” she says. “Fruit is four times the price.” Yet Phuong (pictured right) loves a challenge.

“It presents a really unique opportunity,” she says. “How do you act? How do you get people to think about what they’re eating?”

Phuong has designed a nutrition app for Mongolians that can link users with personalised nutrition advice and reward them for eating healthy foods. She and her co-workers at the Mongolian Public Health Professionals Association have also launched health awareness campaigns and a mentoring program for public health workers.

Although she is only 27, Phuong’s work in Mongolia follows years of volunteer experience and advocacy work.

After graduating from Monash University with a Bachelor of Arts in 2010, Phuong set her sights on fashion design, until the pull of working in public health proved irresistible. She took up an internship at the United Nations and a position at Cancer Council Victoria.

Phuong decided she needed to undertake more study and entered the University of Melbourne’s Master of Public Health program. After an intensive community health course in Jamkhed, India, she was so eager to start work that she took six subjects in her last semester and graduated early.

Phuong says her desire to help people comes from her parents, Vietnamese refugees who relocated to Melbourne 36 years ago.

KA TE STANTON

TOP 10 ALUMNI LOCATIONS*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Alumni</th>
<th>Language</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>205,000</td>
<td>English</td>
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<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>7100</td>
<td>English</td>
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<td>UK</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>1200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>1100</td>
<td>English</td>
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</tbody>
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*Figures are approximate based on current data

Stay connected alumni.unimelb.edu.au

2. Malaysia 7100
1. Australia 205,000
3. US 5800
4. Singapore 4900
5. China 4,500
6. Indonesia 2800
7. Hong Kong 2700
8. UK 2000
9. Canada 1200
10. Thailand 1100

Drawn by the China factor

JUSTIN FUNG (BCom(Hons) 1995, LLB(Hons) 1998, DipML(Chin) 1999)

Justin Fung is a people person. The Melbourne-born management whiz works for one of the world’s largest headhunting firms, Spencer Stuart, where he pairs corporate clients with senior executives across the Asia-Pacific. But the scale of his responsibility belies his connection to the people whose lives are involved.

“It’s kind of a privilege,” he says. “You get to speak to these people and hear their life story. There are a lot of emotions caught up on both sides. It’s a big move for anybody to change positions, particularly at senior levels. It involves their whole family.”

Fung, one of around 2700 alumni based in Hong Kong, specialises in finding executives for major consumer-facing companies. He says it’s part science and part art.

“We try to assess their experiences and the things they have achieved. Would this person be able to do the same things in a different environment?” he says. “It’s not straightforward.”

Now 42, Fung spent his formative years studying at the University of Melbourne. He also worked as a research fellow in the Department of Economics and as a research associate in the Melbourne Business School.

The long-time pianist even picked up an Associate of Music diploma.

In 2000, he was recruited by the Boston Consulting Group, a global management consulting firm that seemed to mesh with his need to learn more about the world. Fung, whose parents are from Hong Kong, also felt called to China. He had fallen in love with the “complexity” of the country during an exchange trip to Beijing and asked for a secondment to Shanghai.

“There was a real buzz, an excitement,” he says of China. He adds: “In those days it seemed like there was so much potential for so many things to happen and so many people’s lives being changed.”

Fung also studied Business Administration at Harvard Business School, where he worked with other students to found a charity helping rural Chinese communities.

KA TE STANTON
New take on prison drama

LEAH SANDERSON
(Grad Dip Film & TV (Narr) 2012, MFT 2015)

Most of the prisoners at Southern Queensland Correctional Centre have experienced a fair bit of drama in their lives. Now, with a little help from Leah Sanderson, they are taking to the stage to explore drama of a different kind – Shakespeare.

Sanderson is project manager for the Shakespeare Prison Project, run by the Queensland Shakespeare Ensemble.

The group works with inmates at the maximum-security prison to produce a Shakespeare play in three months. Sanderson directed the most recent production, Twelfth Night.

While the prisoners generally have no experience of drama, and may initially find Shakespeare’s work daunting, they work together to get to grips with the texts.

“Shakespeare isn’t written to be read off the page, so I think a lot of people who have read Shakespeare in high school found it quite dull or quite complex. Shakespeare is meant to be spoken, acted and engaged with,” Sanderson says.

“Lots of the men actually relate to Shakespeare far more than they think they will. There are so many hearty themes that cross all sections of society and experience that a lot of them really surprise themselves with how much they enjoy it.”

While the project’s most basic objective is to help the prisoners put on a play, there are many spin-off benefits. Sanderson has seen improvements in participants’ literacy, teamwork skills and self-confidence.

There’s also evidence that it helps reduce violence within the prison environment.

The public are invited to watch one performance of each play. Sanderson says the experience often challenges people’s perceptions of prisoners.

Her role allows Sanderson to combine her passions for social justice and creative arts. “I absolutely love going into prison,” she says. “The relationships and friendships we develop with the participants are really refreshing.”

Learn more: bit.ly/1pp1696

52.6% FEMALE
45.8% MALE
1.6% UNSPECIFIED

GENDER SPLIT

LEAH SANDERSON
(Grad Dip Film & TV (Narr) 2012, MFT 2015)

New take on prison drama

A new generation forges link

Why should young alumni engage with the University? Two Alumni Council members explain.

Alumni Council member Margaret Quixley would have loved to call on a mentor in her student days. “It would have been amazing to have access to a mentor or advisor – especially one from a different faculty to my own,” she says.

“I generally would have liked greater exposure to the plethora of career opportunities available and I probably only realised the benefits of having such a mentor once I graduated.”

The expanded mentoring program is one of the opportunities the Alumni Council actively encourages.

Quixley, 29, was elected to the Council – the peak representative body for Melbourne alumni – in 2014. She fits this role around a dual career, as founder of social enterprise Young Opportunities Australia and as Campaigns and Supporter Engagement Strategist for BirdLife Australia.

Quixley (MIR 2014) believes the University is getting better at providing networking opportunities for alumni.

“The range of events available means there is something on for everyone – from career networking to alumni events – for meeting other alumni with similar backgrounds.”

Quixley, like many young alumni, is motivated by the need to network.

“Finding time to build and broaden your skills and experience outside your ‘day job’ is a really important part of career building,” she says.

“The Alumni Council is really passionate about shaping better professional networking outcomes for alumni.”

At 25, Dr James McGann is the Alumni Council’s youngest member. Now a junior doctor at the Austin Hospital in Melbourne, he stresses the benefits of engaging with alumni from beyond your faculty.

“We understand nowadays the importance of improving transfer skills, so connecting with people who have interests in other areas and industries can be greatly beneficial.”

McGann (BBiomed 2011, MD 2015, St Hilda’s College) says the variety of networking events, mentor programs, seminars and public lectures means that a little commitment can go a long way.

“Getting involved shouldn’t be too onerous,” he says.

“We want people to know that the variety of events and number of interesting people you meet means you can get great rewards for a relatively small amount of time and effort.”

The latest opportunities can be found on the new Alumni and Friends website alumni.unimelb.edu.au, which makes connecting with fellow Melbourne alumni easier than ever.

CHRIS WEAVER
The Alumni Council represents the many cultural, academic and professional attributes of the Melbourne alumni community.

The next election will be held later this year. To find out how to nominate and vote, go to alumni.unimelb.edu.au/your-alumni-council

Networking: Margaret Quixley and James McGann

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Dr Richard Pestell (PhD 1991, MD 1997) is a Melbourne alumni who has been awarded the Companion of the Order of Australia, the highest honour awarded to alumni. Dr Pestell is an oncologist and professor in the Thomas Jefferson University. His involvement with universities has received high praise, with several alumni recognizing his contributions to medicine and engineering.

Dr Misty Jenkins (BAppSc(Agr) 2002) is a postdoctoral researcher at La Trobe University. She has been recognized for her work, particularly her work editing the Civil Procedure Rules. She is an Australian Catholic University alumna and has been appointed to senior government roles overseas.

Mr McKeon is a former investment banker and was a 2011 Australian of the Year. Several alumni, all career officers with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, have been appointed to senior government roles.

Mr John Philip has been appointed Australia’s High Commissioner to Trinidad and Tobago, and Australian Ambassador to Canberra High Commission in New Delhi. He has previously served overseas as High Commissioner in Vanuatu and Diplomatic Counsel-General in Hong Kong.

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Several Melbourne alumni have been named in The Australian’s list of 50 most influential people in higher education, including finding that the adult brain could change and its neurons could regenerate. Professor Bartlett is founding director of the Institute of Policy and Science at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre. He was the first in Australia to develop the concept of a ‘brightest’ which recognises Dr Elith’s contributions to the international field of biosecurity risk analysis. She is an Australian Catholic University alumna, and the first in Australia (Constance Stone). It also discusses the founders of the Queen Victoria Hospital, several of whom were University of Melbourne Medical School alumni.

Professor Jayde Lovell (BSc 2007, MA 2010) is a Macquarie university screening committee who is an initiative to encourage more women to enter the field of engineering. Ms Lovell’s idea for a television show focused on a female engineer was handpicked from among multiple candidates. The panel of Hollywood heavyweights included Ugly Betty actress America Ferrera and Anthony E. Zuiker, creator of the CSI franchise.

Professor Patrick Halley (BSc 1974) has been appointed Honorary Consul of France in Hong Kong, with earlier postings in Vanuatu and Deputy Consul-General in Seoul, New York, Port Moresby and Jamaica.

Professor Peter Perry Bartlett FAA (BScHon 1978, PhD 1990) received the CSL Flowery Creek Award for outstanding research. The book, which was also published in 2016, Australia Day Honours. Ms Jenkins’ “outstanding contributions to the field of cancer research”.

Professor Margaret Williams-Weir (BSc(Hons) 1970, MSc 1972, Janet Clarke Hall) is the new President of the University of Melbourne and a member of the Centre of Excellence for Bioresource Management, which includes finding that the adult brain could change and its neurons could regenerate. Professor Bartlett is founding director of the Institute of Policy and Science at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre. The first in Australia to develop the concept of a ‘brightest’ which recognises Dr Elith’s contributions to the international field of biosecurity risk analysis. She is an Australian Catholic University alumna, and the first in Australia (Constance Stone).

Dr David Baigrie (BSc(Hons) 1971, PhD 1976) is the former Executive Director of the Committee for Greater Shepparton. He has previously served as Assistant Secretary to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and as Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva.

Mr Simon McKonan AO (BCom 1974, LLB 1978) has been appointed Chairman of Monash University.

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My father, Doug, was the winemaker at Seppelt in Rutherglen and I suppose there were expectations that I would follow in his footsteps. But I didn’t want that, not back in the late 1970s anyway. When I graduated from uni, winemaking was far from my mind. A possible career in the petrochemical industry (I had a summer job at Shell analysing oils) beckoned, but by the third year I knew it wasn’t for me.

I got my degree and then I was off. Two years of travel across South-East Asia and Europe followed. In London I found work as an au pair for a well-to-do Notting Hill couple with four children. The wife was a fantastic cook. I have worked for a few people who have been excellent cooks. I’d be forever looking over their shoulder to see what was happening or helping out. I was always doing that with my mum, too. She wasn’t such a great cook but us kids were always putting cubes of cheese on skewers or making pinwheel sandwiches when my parents entertained.

Often now I will look through my family’s old recipe books and it’s my dad who has written out the recipe. My dad was really into his food. On Saturdays he’d load us up into the car with Eskeys and we would drive to Albury to the only delicatessen for miles and buy Hungarian white-skinned salami, smoked oysters in bottles, camembert in cans and port salut. We would complain in the car on the way home how much it stank.

After Europe, I was back at home in Rutherglen (300 kilometres north-east of Melbourne). I needed a job. Finally, winemaking won out.

I started with my uncle Les, at Jones Winery, just outside town. It would have been around 1987. He was a bit of a seat-of-the-pants winemaker, so after a couple of years with him I took myself off to Charles Sturt Uni to study winemaking. I won the Ron Potter Scholarship, making me a cellar hand at the uni winery, but it led to the opening up of so many more doors.

I worked vintage in Portugal, Chile, and then Bordeaux in France. That led to a permanent job at Chateau Carsin in the Cotes de Bordeaux. I was made winemaker – the first woman cellar manager in the region’s history, according to one French magazine. I was 30.

What a learning experience. We had one contract with a big UK supermarket chain, Sainsbury’s, to make wine for their private label, including a Cuvee Prestige Claret. The Sainsbury’s people came to me one day and put a bottle of Yalumba shiraz on the table and said, ‘Can you make that?’

I said no, I’m in Bordeaux, I can’t make a wine like that but I can make a wine with as rich a mouthfeel as I can. We started off small making 160,000 bottles of that style and by the end of the contract Sainsbury’s was selling over one million bottles a year.

After 10 years I was ready for home, but before I left I lived in Paris for six months and attended the Cordon Bleu Culinary School, finishing with a diploma and some great cooking skills. We learnt to truss a bird properly, de-vein yabbies while they were still alive, chop up live crayfish, frogs’ legs. You could say it was challenging!

Jones Winery is where you will find me these days, making wine, overseeing the preparation of meals for our cafe and special events, and working with my brother, Arthur, who looks after our 9.17 hectares of vines. The winery dates back to 1860. There is so much character here.

I stick to Rutherglen grape classics for the most part – shiraz, durif, malbec, muscat – but there are alternative varieties that seem well suited here, too, such as Italy’s fiano.

With our wines you will always see a sense of place. I learnt that philosophy in Bordeaux – seek out the varieties that do well on your bit of dirt, stay true, don’t give in to trends.

I would never try sauvignon blanc or chardonnay here. It’s just not right.

I have been lucky in my life. Fate, too, has played a part. I will always be proud that both Bill Clinton and Mikhail Gorbachev have been served my wine – a Chateau Carsin White Bordeaux. Not bad for a girl from Rutherglen.
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