Welcome from the Executive Director

Welcome to the first edition of ASDI’s newsletter for 2012. It is my pleasure to announce the appointment of Mr Mike Burbridge as the new Executive Director of ASDI.

Mike joins us on 5 March. He brings with him a wealth of experience working on sustainable development in the public and private sectors in both the UK and Australia.

He has worked in the UK Government's Sustainable Development Unit and was responsible for the UK’s first report into progress towards sustainable development as well as establishing the UK government’s first sustainable development website.

Mike worked on ensuring the London Olympic Games lives up to the promise of being the greenest games in history as well as developing the UK’s approach to sustainable construction.

He worked closely with UK Government Ministers as the non-political Head of Office for the Minister of Biodiversity, Landscape and Rural Affairs.

On leaving the UK public service Mike was technical Director for one of the UK's largest technical engineering and environmental consultancies. One of his key projects was advising the Government on how to manage their estate in a sustainable manner.

He arrived in Australia a couple of years ago and settled in Melbourne working for Victoria’s Department of Treasury and Finance - initially on sustainability projects and latterly on reforms to help individual departments plan and report progress on delivering Government outcomes. He is currently in the process of moving Perth with his wife and family.

If you would like to arrange a time to speak with Mike, please contact his Executive Officer, Ms Kelly Pilgrim-Byrne on 08 9266 1792.

Mr Charlie Thorn
Director, Research and Development

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Curtin University’s Centre for Marine Science and Technology (CMST) has initiated a collaborative science program, SouWEST, to help secure the long-term future of vulnerable and endangered whales in south Western Australia.

The newly established program integrates the research expertise of CMST at Curtin, Western Whale Research (WWR), and the community outreach experience of the Dunsborough Coast and Land Care (D-CALC) group, with an aim to improve the scientific foundation for environmental management and whale species protection.

CMST Deputy Director, Dr Chandra Salgado Kent, said iconic cetacean species, including the humpback, blue, and the southern right whales, listed internationally as high-priority species for conservation, used locations within south Western Australia for migrating, resting, and calving each year.

“Not only do locations such as Geographe Bay provide key habitat for whales of a variety of species, but it is one of very few places in the world where the largest of these animals, the blue whale, migrates within hundreds of metres of the coast,” Dr Salgado Kent said.

“Blue Whale populations in particular, continue to be listed as endangered and have not recovered since the whaling that decimated the population from 1915-1965.

“We want to better understand the current status of whales so that we can ensure that any current ongoing pressures to the population can be managed for effective population recovery and species conservation.”

Dr Salgado Kent said the SouWEST study also sought to obtain a better idea of the current numbers of whales using significant resting areas during sensitive periods of their life history, including mother and calf pairs.

“Geographe Bay is a last stop for many whales migrating south with their young calves before crossing the Southern Ocean to Antarctica or the southern convergence zone to reach their main feeding grounds,” she said.

“Therefore, obtaining a long-term data set investigating how whales are using this location is fundamental to conservation efforts. Without this information, it will not be possible for us to fully understand the significance of Geographe Bay to these animals.”

Dr Salgado Kent said the SouWEST study would also look at gaining a better understanding of whale vocalisation behaviour when migrating in WA waters.

“Last year’s acoustic recordings were filled with humpback whale song and a variety of blue whale vocalisations, resulting in a wealth of information on acoustic behaviours and whale group interactions in the resting area,” she said.

Two Master of Marine Mammal Science field coordinators, Ms Sarah Marley and Ms Angela Recalde-Salas, also of CMST, assisted and ran the whale tracking component of the SouWEST program in 2011.

CMST comprises a multi-skilled group of scientists and engineers committed to the development of technical ocean-related skills in Australia with expertise fitting into four major categories: Hydrodynamics, Underwater Acoustics, Marine Ecology and Stereoscopic Imaging.

The Centre works in close cooperation with Curtin’s Department of Imaging and Applied Physics, Department of Applied Geology, Remote Sensing Group, Aquatic Science Group, and Department of Environmental Biology, as well as the Western Australian Energy Research Alliance, Integrated Marine Observing System, the Australian Maritime College, and many others.

cmst.curtin.edu.au
A new Curtin University Centre for Marine Science and Technology (CMST) study aims to gain a more comprehensive picture of Western Australia’s largest and most inaccessible fishery.

Led by Dr Miles Parsons of CMST, the Australian Government’s Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC)-funded project will trial an acoustic survey program, with the help of the commercial fishing industry, to collect data about the Northern Demersal Scalefish Fishery (NDSF).

Stretching from south west of Broome to the Northern Territory border, in waters off the north west coast of Western Australia, and extending out to the edge of the Australian Fishing Zone, the Fishery supplies highly prized species including the red emperor and goldband snapper.

Dr Parsons said the enormity, inaccessibility and remoteness of components of the fisheries had traditionally made stock assessments expensive, making it difficult to gain a better understanding of the entire fishery.

“To counter these limitations, the project will partner with the commercial fishing industry to take advantage of the time their vessels are at sea,” Dr Parsons said.

“The three-year study will use advanced acoustic techniques to collect data from the sea floor and water column to provide maps of the habitat and relative abundance of fish and plankton across the Fishery.

“In temperate areas of the northern hemisphere, where diversity is low, stocks are relatively large and fisheries acoustics has become a standard technique to monitor and delineate essential fish habitat and to discriminate quantifiable stocks of individual species.”

Dr Parsons said commercial fishers were significant partners in the project and would help to collect substantial sets of acoustic data during their routine fishing operations over the next three years.

“By collaborating with fishing vessels, such as the Carolina M, and its skipper Adam Masters, who regularly operates across vast, remote areas, we can gather data in a way that would normally be impossible for us,” he said.

The study will be funded through the FRDC and Shell Development Limited, with substantial support from some of the licensees of the NDSF and the Department of Fisheries.

The CMST have investigated underwater acoustic techniques for over two decades and through this collaboration with industry will be helping to develop and standardise the collection of fisheries acoustics data in remote regions of Australia in collaboration with the commercial fishing industry.

cmst.curtin.edu.au
FOOD SECURITY & HEALTH

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Minister for Agriculture and Food, the Hon Terry Redman MLA, attended a Curtin University workshop in February to discuss some of the biggest food security issues facing Western Australians.

Professor Bornman said further issues facing WA food security included transport logistics, lower food quality in remote areas, price discrepancies between nutritious food and junk food and high levels of food wastage.

Hosted by Curtin’s newly established International Institute of Agri-Food Security (IIAFS), sponsored by the WA Department of Health, Fruit West, and the University, the Food Security and Healthy Food in Western Australia Workshop invited participants from industry, government and social organisations to discuss accessible and healthy food strategy in WA, with a particular focus on remote and Indigenous communities.

In her opening address, Curtin’s IIAFS Director, Professor Janet Bornman, said major challenges in food security included the creation of effective strategies to increase local food sustainability and increasing community awareness of the health benefits of quality food.

“Another challenge is to maintain a reliable and secure supply chain from farm to consumer at local levels that can snowball into an efficient supply chain network,” Professor Bornman said.

“Climate variability, global economics and trade markets are removing many of the differences in food security issues that once separated developing and developed countries and we are all moving towards similar sustainability risks.”

An estimated four million tonnes of food is wasted or thrown away by Australians annually, equivalent to roughly 178 kg per person per year. In financial terms, Australians are throwing away $7.8 billion each year.

“An emphasis resting solely on production runs the risk of ignoring the need to produce quality, nutritious food,” she said.

“Increasing producer and consumer awareness, and collaborative efforts across key sectors are essential to meeting these challenges.

“By working together to identify the common elements between agriculture and healthy outcomes for a healthy population and agreeing to exchange knowledge and ideas to solve food security issues across our sectors, we will find unique opportunities to tackle these issues head on.”

Healthway Food Law Chief Investigator and Curtin Research Fellow, Dr Christina Pollard, said a major challenge in terms of food security from a health perspective was to ensure physical and economic access to nutritious food for all Western Australians.

“In 2009, about five per cent of Western Australian adults said that someone in their household had run out of food because they did not have enough money in the last year.

“This is relatively unchanged since 2005 when five per cent of Western Australians over 15 years of age said they had run out of food in the last year. Alarmingly the figure was 26 per cent for Indigenous Western Australians.

“The workshop provided the opportunity for dialogue and the development of collaborative partnerships that will be used for maintaining a viable, action-oriented working group.

“This networking group will have the capability to advise policymakers, local authorities and communities on these issues.”

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International energy research institute launched at Curtin

On the 2nd February, The Honourable Martin Ferguson AM MP, Federal Minister for Resources and Energy, launched Curtin University’s Fuels and Energy Technology Institute (FETI) at Technology Park, Bentley.

FETI will carry out fundamental research and technology development to provide solutions to the energy and environmental issues facing Australia.

The Institute will have a network of research collaboration with researchers from around Australia, China, Japan, Korea, Europe and USA.

FETI Director, John Curtin Distinguished Professor Chun-Zhu Li, said the Institute will ensure Western Australia continues to deliver ground-breaking research into the areas of renewable and fossil fuel energies.

“This Institute sees government, industry and educational institutions work together to address national needs for fuels and energy to deliver improved energy security and reduced CO₂ emissions,” Professor Li said.

“We believe that FETI will become an international centre of excellence in the field of energy science and engineering.”


The Institute’s Biofuel Research and Development Facility was also launched this morning by the Minister.

The Facility is a part of a large project led by Professor Li and involves researchers in Curtin, WA Department of Environment and Conservation, CSIRO and the Future Farm Industries CRC. The project has been jointly funded by Federal Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism, the Western Australian state government, Curtin University and project participants.

About FETI

Fuels and Energy Technology Institute (FETI), formerly known as the Curtin Centre for Advanced Energy Science and Engineering (CCAASE), is a newly established research Institute at Curtin University of Technology. With over fifty researchers and an array of advanced facilities and analytical instruments, the Institute aims to be a centre of excellence in the field of energy science and engineering in the world.

The research activities in the Centre cover both fossil fuels and renewable energy technologies, supported by the fundings from the Australia federal government, WA state government and industry partners as well as the University.

The fundamental elements of the Institute’s role are to carry out basic and applied research in energy and fuel conversions to develop advanced technologies that address national needs for fuels and energy and to transfer them to the commercial sector.

The Institute already has a substantial international collaboration network, especially with researchers in Australia, China, Korea, Japan, Denmark, and USA. The Institute continues to seek productive international collaboration, particularly with top research organisations in the Asia-Pacific region.

Establishing substantial collaboration with major industry partners, both within and outside Australia, is a strategic direction of the Institute.

energy.curtin.edu.au
Curtin University researchers have been awarded a $1.4 million grant to independently assess the injection capacity of carbon dioxide (CO₂) at selected sites, to assist local communities, industry and government to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

"Following this study, there will be a high degree of confidence in the tested sites' CO₂ injection capabilities, as well as data for potential assessments for geosequestration sites in Western Australia, Victoria and Queensland."

"Once we have the laboratory testing procedure optimised, we will be able to test cores from reservoirs from around the world."

Professor Evans said a specialised, independent CO₂ injectivity analysis service would become available to industry in Australia and internationally as a result of the project.

The method of geosequestration involves capturing CO₂ from a source, such as a power station, and injecting it, in a compressed form via a pipeline, directly into deep, underground geological formations.

"Research of this nature has never been conducted before and will provide an insight into the optimum method of evaluation of dynamic injectivity conditions at a number of potential Australian test sites," Professor Evans said.

Professor Evans said the research would offer the longer-term potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through the geosequestration of CO₂ at sites which were proven to be capable of short term injection and storage of CO₂.

"In testing the cores at each chosen storage site, we will determine how suitable each tested rock core is, and therefore which sites are capable of CO₂ injection and dynamic storage of CO₂," he said.

"The cores will be tested in Curtin’s Core Flooding, Rock Physics and Exploration Geophysics Laboratories, as well as CSIRO’s CT Laboratory, all co-located in the ARRC building at Technology Park, Kensington."
Curtin Institute of Biodiversity and Climate scientist, Prof Jonathan Majer, was recently invited as a keynote speaker at the International Conference on Entomology, held at the Punjabi University, Patiala, India. The Punjab is an agricultural state which since the Green Revolution has become a major provider of grains and food for the country. Not surprisingly, most arable land has been converted to agriculture, leaving around 2% of the area under native vegetation. There remain five wetlands in the Punjab and some forests along foothills of the Shivalik mountains. There are also few remnants of native vegetation on some of the farms, and there are isolated native trees in the fields.

Despite the benefits, the Green Revolution has led to reduced genetic diversity, increased vulnerability to pests, soil erosion, water shortages, reduced soil fertility, micronutrient deficiencies, and soil contamination. Also, with so much land conversion, local biodiversity has declined dramatically, with plants, vertebrates and invertebrates being equally affected.

By drawing on his research in Australia, Prof Majer’s paper, entitled ‘An environmental entomologist in the Punjab’, explored the ways in which knowledge and consideration of invertebrate ecology might contribute to resolving some of the environmental problems that the Punjab is currently faced with. In addition, it suggested ways in which agricultural production can be reconciled with the need to conserve elements of the original biodiversity which once inhabited the region.

The paper was extremely well received, and hopefully will open up new approaches to entomological research in northern India. Prior to presenting his paper, Prof Majer was ‘honoured’ at the opening ceremony for his services to entomology.

ENVIRONMENTAL ENTOMOLOGY

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CIBC has five objectives:

- Build biodiversity research capacity.
- Have a ‘one-stop-shop’ for biodiversity research at Curtin.
- Create synergies in biodiversity research.
- Forge strong and enduring partnerships.
- Positively influence society.

These are being met through high quality research projects, strategic collaborations across discipline areas as well as partnerships with industry, agencies and communities; mentoring of early career researchers and post-graduate students; and publications, events and other communications to effectively disseminate research results.

CIBC is located in an area with a wide range of social, cultural and economic values in addition to its recognised global biodiversity value, and which is home to most of WA’s residents. It therefore has a unique and important opportunity to investigate biodiversity and the application of existing and emerging analytical techniques in the context of the complex social, economic and cultural concerns of the population. CIBC provides a world-class skill set to make a difference.

cibc.curtin.edu.au
A partnership with CBS School of Accounting sees the Centre for Sport and Recreation Research (CSRR) continuing to expand its portfolio of trans-discipline research aimed at informing sport and recreation decision making.

It is estimated there are some five thousand sport and recreation clubs and associations active in Western Australia. These organisations are part of the significant not-for-profit sector that plays an important role in building a productive and inclusive Australia.

However, unlike social service providers or charities, sport and recreation organisations are generally not the first to spring to mind as examples of not-for-profit entities.

The Australian Government has recently committed to delivering a reform package that will strengthen the not-for-profit sector and improve regulatory arrangements to better enable not-for-profits to focus less on paper work and more on innovation and building on current strengths.

To ensure work progressing reform is relevant to sport and recreation CSRR has partnered with a team from the School of Accounting, Curtin Business School. Lead by Professor David Gilchrist, with colleagues Associate Professor Robyn Pilcher and Penny Knight, the team has embarked on the first stage of a three year longitudinal study aimed at addressing the information needs of those involved with the governance of sport and recreation organisations at all levels.

David has been involved in the government, not-for-profit and charitable sectors in Western Australia for two decades and brings to the project his findings from similar research currently underway in the human services sector. To ensure relevance to sport and recreation, the project is guided by a steering group comprising CSRR, the Department of Sport and Recreation WA (DSR) and the WA Sports Federation (WASF).

The project is intended to respond to the information needs of not-for-profit organisations, funder government agencies and other organisations (such as peak bodies) that have an interest in:

- The efficient and effective operation of the not-for-profit sector in Western Australia.
- The development of policy that is workable and useful for the achievement of an array of social goals in the short, medium and long terms.

As such this is important, wide ranging and badly needed research, the effects of which it is expected will be felt by all not-for-profit organisations and those reliant on them. Importantly, the research will be undertaken over a three year period initially. The longitudinal aspect of this study is important as it allows for greater understanding of the extent to which the sector is maturing over time.

About CSRR

CSRR provides an independent perspective to identify issues that will:

1. Impact sport and recreation decision making
2. Benefit from sport and recreation association

CSRR operates by drawing together multi-discipline teams to undertake research that informs decision makers.

The teams generally combine academics who contribute specific knowledge and research strengths, with on-the-ground practitioners from industry and government.

The provision of information that allows volunteer managers and governance personnel, policy makers, funders and others to gain an understanding of the sustainability, capacity and maturity of the sector allowing for the establishment of benchmarks and an understanding of the trajectory of change within the sector.
The WA-Organic and Isotope Geochemistry Centre (WA-OIGC) welcomes Dr Alison Blyth. Alison has been awarded one (NCG) of two highly competitive 50% AINSE/ANSTO Research Fellowship positions for a period of 3 years.

Alison will be carrying out some teaching in the Department of Applied Geology, in addition to focusing on her research project which is titled, Biomarker, stable isotopic, and radiocarbon records preserved in terrestrial organic matter.

Her Project continues previous work analysing the organic matter content of speleothems (CaCO3 cave deposits), and developing new palaeoclimate proxies in this context. Her last fellowship focused on the calibration of a GDGT temperature proxy in this context, whilst the focus of this fellowship shifts towards analysing organic matter stable isotope records, both bulk and compound specific isotopes.

Small scale radiocarbon dating will be used to investigate lags in the record, the integrity of the chemostratigraphy, and the rates of turnover in different organic matter fractions.

Alison will be using WA-OIGC’s new LC-MS Orbitrap for a GDGT’s temperature proxies.

A brief history of Alison’s research interests follow.

- Increase the ability to identify crude oil and gas sources, to the benefit of petroleum exploration;
- Improve understanding of controls on water quality and to help protect our precious freshwater resources which are already under intense pressure from climate change.

Professor Kliti Grice is the Director of the WA-OIGC and an ARC QEII Research Fellow.

Kliti has 19 years research experience in stable isotope analysis of organic compounds (biomarkers), particularly carbon and hydrogen compound specific isotope analyses.

She obtained her PhD in 1995 at University of Bristol (UK) under the guidance of Professor James Maxwell. She carried out a post-doctoral research fellowship at the Netherlands Institute for Sea Research, Holland. In 1998 she was appointed as a senior research fellow at Curtin University, and in 2002 was awarded an ARC QEII Fellowship and in 2003 was appointed to a tenured position as A/Professor.

In 2006 Kliti was awarded a personal chair of Organic and Isotope Geochemistry in the Department of Chemistry. Her research interests are understanding the biogeochemistry of extant organisms (e.g., from land plants, bacteria, algae to stromatolites etc.) and using molecular fossils and their stable carbon and hydrogen isotopic signals in order to reconstruct ancient environments and understand how life evolved. She is currently investigating the 5 largest mass extinction events of the geological record. She has published widely in leading international journals, has established international/national collaborations, obtained significant ARC funding, won state, national and international awards for her research.

wa-oigc.curtin.edu.au/
Slow Food Perth

SLOW Food Perth initiates and participates in projects that are designed to reconnect people with good food and helps farmers and makers to market their products. These range from school garden development to the collection and promotion of producer information.

Some of their current projects are:

School gardens
Encouraging young children to learn about the source of food, soil health and the benefits and enjoyment of fresh food. See our Food with latitude project which, in conjunction with the children’s environment awareness organisation, Millennium Kids, encompasses primary schools in Perth, the Western Australian Goldfields and a village school at Ntshidi on the South Africa-Botswana border.

Perth farmers’ markets
Supporting alternative opportunities for farmers and makers to market their produce direct to the community. Perth has a burgeoning market culture, with regular markets in Kalamunda, Mount Claremont and Subiaco.

Western Australian producers’ and food directory
Developing a directory to identify and promote organic, biodynamic and other producers farming and creating food which is good, clean and fair. To be eligible, farmers and makers’ foods must taste good; their production methods must respect animals, the environment and people’s health; and all participants producing the food must be fairly rewarded for their work.

Slow food at the edge of the world
Collecting and collating recipes from West Australians of diverse cultural backgrounds to ensure the preservation of food knowledge and the enjoyment of these foods by future generations of families and cooks.

Formerly known as the Swan Catchment Council, the Board is a nineteen member group drawn from the community, State Government and Local Government.

As one of 56 groups from around Australia, the Council is helping to achieve a nation-wide approach to management and restoration of our environment.

www.perthregionrm.com/

Centre for Sustainable Living, Denmark
Come and experience how you or your school, community, organisation or industry can live and work sustainably from those who’ve been doing it successfully for 20 years on WA’s beautiful South West Coast.

The Centre offers a broad range of interactive workshops, seminars, and, live-in programs passing on knowledge, skills and practices acquired over many years.

The Centre is an inspirational training, education, conference and accommodation facility supporting sustainable living. It provides many demonstrations of sustainability in action, including passive solar heating, onsite wastewater management systems, constructed wetlands, active solar space heating, the use of low toxic materials, sensitive landscape design, and recycling.

The Centre sits on a hectare of land adjacent to the Denmark High School, Denmark TAFE and Denmark Agricultural School and within a 10 minutes walk from the centre of Denmark. From being ear-marked for demolition in 2000, it has been renovated, extended and restored by a team of dedicated local builders and craftsmen. The Centre is near to the shores of the Denmark River and its adjacent bicycle/walking paths leading to the Denmark township, local parks and the beautiful Wilsons Inlet. Green Skills manages the Centre for Sustainable Living on behalf of the Denmark Education and Innovation Centre.

The Denmark region offers visitors a range of experiences as diverse as its incredible scenery. Some of Australia’s finest wineries, a wealth of creative artistry, and world-class natural attractions - magnificent karri forests, idyllic estuaries and glorious coastline are all available in or within a few kilometers of the centre. The town itself offers artistic venues, shops and a wide range of local craft outlets.


Perth Region NRM

Perth Region NRM is a community-led regional group with responsibility for coordinating and delivering natural resource management (NRM) in the Perth Region.
Upcoming ASDI Events
Supporting material (iLectures, notes, etc) for the majority of the following events can be found at www.asdi.org.au

Other Events
Rio+20
20-22 June in Brazil

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) is being organised in pursuance of General Assembly Resolution 64/236 (A/RES/64/236). The Conference will take place in Brazil on 20-22 June 2012 to mark the 20th anniversary of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), in Rio de Janeiro, and the 10th anniversary of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg. It is envisaged as a Conference at the highest possible level, including Heads of State and Government or other representatives. The Conference will result in a focused political document.

The objective of the Conference is to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable development, assess the progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development, and address new and emerging challenges. The Conference will focus on two themes: (a) a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication; and (b) the institutional framework for sustainable development.

www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/about.html

ASDI External Board

Mr Keith Spence (Chair)
Keith was most recently Executive Vice President Enterprise Capability for Woodside and was responsible for ensuring the business operated with the best people, technology and processes. He was also responsible for building a skilled and technologically advanced workforce through targeted recruiting and enhanced training and played a key role in representing Woodside’s interests to the government and the public. In addition, he was responsible for Woodside’s Western Australian gas supply interests.

Mr Barry Carbon, FTSE, AM
Mr Carbon’s experience includes: Chief Executive of the Ministry for the Environment, New Zealand; Director General-Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage; Director General-Queensland Environment Protection Agency, including Parks and Wildlife; Executive Director, EPA, Commonwealth of Australia; The Supervising Scientist, Alligator Rivers Region; Chairman and Commonwealth Representative, National Environment Protection Council Committee and served on the Environment Protection Authority of Western Australia as Chairman from 1985 – 86 and as Chairman and Chief Executive from 1986-93.

Ms Michelle Andrews
Michelle Andrews has recently commenced as the Deputy Director General, Strategic Policy at the Department of Mines and Petroleum (DMP). Prior to the position she was the Executive Director of State Initiatives at the Department of State Development (DSD).

She has also contributed to the State Government’s approval process reforms, including establishing the new Office of the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA).

She has been involved in environmental approvals for major development projects, including the Gorgon project, Chevron’s Wheatstone project and the Oakajee Port and Rail project.

ASDI Internal Board

Professor Graeme Wright,
deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research and Development

Professor Andris Stelbovics,
Pro Vice-Chancellor, Science and Engineering

Professor Majella Franzmann,
Pro Vice-Chancellor, Humanities

Professor Tony Travaglione,
Acting Pro Vice-Chancellor, Curtin Business School

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