

Summary of Discovery Projects Applications for Funding to Commence in 2006

Victoria

La Trobe University

DP0662909 Dr BA Cardak; Prof BJ Chapman; Prof VL Martin

Approved Project Title **Why poorer students are less likely to go to university: Theoretical and empirical evidence for Australia with implications for policy**

2006 : \$100,000

2007 : \$65,000

2008 : \$70,000

Primary RFCD 3402 APPLIED ECONOMICS

Administering Institution La Trobe University

Project Summary

This project will improve our understanding of the factors that lead to the under-representation of low income students in universities in Australia and other countries. The focus of the analysis will be the impact of a student's family and household environment and innate ability on their school performance, an essential pre-requisite for university admission, together with the costs of university education. Identifying the relative importance of these factors in determining educational success will enable families, schools, universities and educational policy-makers to improve opportunities for high ability students from all socioeconomic backgrounds. This will in turn enhance economic growth and productivity, benefiting all Australians.

DP0662929 Dr FJ Collins; Dr SE Turnbull; Dr SL Bye

Approved Project Title **Australian Screen Comedy**

2006 : \$147,000

2007 : \$75,000

2008 : \$75,350

Primary RFCD 4203 CULTURAL STUDIES

APD Dr SL Bye

Administering Institution La Trobe University

Project Summary

This project will analyse the different types of screen comedy produced in Australia in order to understand how comedy has shaped a sense of who we are as Australians. It will provide an understanding of why some Australian comedies and comedians succeed at home but not abroad and whether comedy can claim to be representative of an Australian way of life. It will make a contribution to a network of current research projects into the history and aesthetics of Australian television and film, producing synergies in national media research.

DP0664126 Dr M Connors

Approved Project Title **The role of development agencies in shaping national identity in Thailand**

2006 : \$45,000

2007 : \$20,000

2008 : \$20,000

Primary RFCD 3601 POLITICAL SCIENCE

Administering Institution La Trobe University

Project Summary

The study will provide much needed research on a country that has an important bilateral relationship with Australia. More specifically, the role of development agencies in the shaping of national identity is little understood. Given the increased role that such agencies play in the reconstruction of nations, this is a timely study. My study, based on intense fieldwork and extensive use of Thai language documents, will offer an analysis of this role. Understanding how Thai national identity has adapted to change is an important component of Australian cross-cultural literacy, and important in understanding the future direction of Thai politics.

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DP0665250 Dr RF Cosgrove; Dr C Shen; Dr H Lu; Dr S Wang

Approved Project Title **Chinese Middle to Late Pleistocene hominid behaviour: exploring cultural variability through time and space**

2006 : \$156,000

2007 : \$82,000

2008 : \$125,000

Primary RFCD 4302 ARCHAEOLOGY AND PREHISTORY

APD Dr S Wang

Administering Institution La Trobe University

Project Summary

This research will contribute to the understanding of the spread of our species out of Africa 2 million years ago into East Asia. It examines the range of hominid behaviours and ecological circumstances that led to the successful colonisation of China by Homo erectus. It also addresses the vexed question of the relationship between H. erectus and H. sapiens. Did the latter evolve in situ from their antecedents as some suggest, or did H. sapiens replace H. erectus, in the great diaspora from Africa 120,000 years ago?

DP0663969 Prof SF Crowe

Approved Project Title **Remembering that things have changed: A behavioural, pharmacological and biochemical examination of the differences between consolidation and re-consolidation in the day-old chick.**

2006 : \$60,000

2007 : \$50,000

2008 : \$50,000

Primary RFCD 3801 PSYCHOLOGY

Administering Institution La Trobe University

Project Summary

This project has five national benefits. 1) It addresses a fundamental scientific and practical problem: to determine whether re-consolidation is actually a repetition of consolidation or in fact a distinct process; 2) it will provide a comprehensive account of how the two processes compare at a biochemical level; 3) it may ultimately provide a pharmacological and behavioural approach to modifying troubling or unwanted memories such as the concerns which may result in post-traumatic stress disorder; 4) it will contribute to Australia's international reputation in behavioural neuroscience and 5) it will provide outstanding training opportunities for Australian undergraduate and postgraduate research students in behavioural neuroscience.

DP0664424 Prof PL Dyson; A/Prof FW Menk; Dr CL Waters

Approved Project Title **Dual Radar Studies of Sub-Auroral Magnetosphere-Ionosphere Coupling**

2006 : \$143,000

2007 : \$120,000

2008 : \$120,000

Primary RFCD 2606 ATMOSPHERIC SCIENCES

Administering Institution La Trobe University

Project Summary

Benefits include:

- improved ability to observe, understand and predict space weather impacts on Australia's communications, navigation, and surveillance capabilities;
- support for specific Australian programs such as: the JORN the over-the-horizon radar coastal surveillance system; IPS Radio and Space Services space weather monitoring activities (TIGER is a key component of the Australian Space Weather Plan - Strategic Planning to 2010 and Beyond);
- continue to provide Australia with a central role in the multi-nation SuperDARN project that continues to pioneer new initiatives in successful network operations for scientific studies and for the development of space weather data products for monitoring agencies and other scientists.

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DP0664973 Dr RM Ford

Approved Project Title **Working the Land: Women's Rural Labour and the Making of a Nation, Australia, 1901-1945**

2006 : \$39,000

2007 : \$39,000

2008 : \$42,000

Primary RFCD 4301 HISTORICAL STUDIES

Administering Institution La Trobe University

Project Summary

Dr Ford's research delivers social, cultural and economic benefits to Australia, particularly for rural Australia, for women and for aging Australians. Her work will increase community understanding about working life in rural Australia; the relationship between land, agriculture, gender and national identity; and the ways women combined family responsibilities with farm work - issues central to debates about the role of rural Australia and work/life balance. Her project will contribute to rural communities' sense of identity, as well as promote heritage tourism, important to regional economic development. It will also develop partnerships between universities and rural communities and improve the global visibility of Australian research.

DP0663027 Dr TJ Minchin; Prof JA Salmond

Approved Project Title **Still Fighting for Our Rights: The Ongoing Struggle for Civil Rights in the USA, 1965-1980**

2006 : \$48,000

2007 : \$49,000

2008 : \$31,070

Primary RFCD 4301 HISTORICAL STUDIES

Administering Institution La Trobe University

Project Summary

The American civil rights struggle has close parallels with Australia's, since both countries are new and culturally-diverse societies where race has played a central role in defining the national character. Our study will help to further strengthen the close links between Australia and the U.S., and will raise the profile of Australian higher education in the U.S, since both Minchin and Salmond have published widely in the U.S, especially in this field. Much of the recent upsurge in scholarship on U.S. civil rights has been carried out by scholars based outside the U.S., especially in Europe, and it is vital to have Australian-based scholars and institutions at the heart of this vibrant and relevant field.

DP0664059 Dr JM Santini

Approved Project Title **Arsenite oxidation by a novel bacterium that is a candidate for arsenic bioremediation**

2006 : \$109,000

2007 : \$44,000

2008 : \$44,000

Primary RFCD 2703 MICROBIOLOGY

Administering Institution La Trobe University

Project Summary

The arsenic munching microbe NT-26 could help in the fight to clean up arsenic-contaminated mining waste and drinking water. Arsenic poses an environmental problem in countries such as Australia, USA and Canada owing primarily to mining activities. The problem in countries such as Bangladesh and West Bengal are even more serious as these people are dying of arsenic-related diseases as they rely on water containing arsenic as their primary source of drinking water. The outcomes of this research should provide the necessary information for removing arsenic from all types of waters.

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DP0663825 Dr M Tabain

Approved Project Title **The effects of sentence structure on consonant and vowel articulations**

2006 : \$75,000

2007 : \$45,000

2008 : \$30,000

Primary RFCD 3802 LINGUISTICS

Administering Institution La Trobe University

Project Summary

Whilst machine-generated speech is generally of good quality at the level of the single word, it is noticeably less natural-sounding at the level of the sentence. This project examines an important aspect of the naturalness of human speech, namely, the effect that sentence structure has on individual consonants and vowels. A break-down of this naturalness is seen in some speakers who have suffered traumatic brain injury: such speakers perform well when asked to utter a short word, but struggle when asked to produce a longer string of sounds. A better understanding of the interaction between speech sounds and sentence structure will lead to improvements in the treatment of speech disorders, and in the quality of human-machine communication.

DP0664177 Prof MR Thornton

Approved Project Title **EEO in a Culture of Uncertainty**

2006 : \$130,000

2007 : \$130,000

2008 : \$115,000

2009 : \$86,500

2010 : \$89,500

Primary RFCD 3701 SOCIOLOGY

APF Prof MR Thornton

Administering Institution La Trobe University

Project Summary

Australia appears to be losing its commitment to equal opportunity as work becomes increasingly insecure. Deference to employers, including transnational corporations, is already exercising a disproportionate effect on women, racial minorities and people with disabilities. The impact of the market, globalisation and free trade agreements is resulting in the increasing marginalisation of EEO and anti-discrimination measures. As a turning away from social justice in favour of the market and profit-making can only impoverish a democratic society, this timely study will examine the nature of the retreat in the hope that something might be done about it.