The May Budget brought wonderful news for health and medical research in Australia with substantial new funding provided by the Government for both the establishment of a new fellowship scheme particularly designed to attract high quality Australian researchers back to Australia and also a very large additional injection into the core health and medical research budget. The Minister will shortly announce a new Chair of Research Committee and with Warwick Anderson as the new Chief Executive Officer for the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), we should all look forward to some further exciting changes in the way in which health and medical research is developed in Australia over the next few years. The possibility of moving to a Canadian style National Institutes of Health Research remains very much on the agenda and I believe that this will be of profound importance particularly for strategic research in the area of population health and health services. For me personally, I will be finishing my third triennium on Research Committee, having been Deputy Chair over the last three years. For me, this has been a total 9 years on Research Committee, over a period when I believe there has been substantial improvement in the way in which public health and health services research has been funded in Australia. Our School has benefited substantially from the many new programs that have been introduced and as have many other academic public health entities around the country.

As noted elsewhere in this month's newsletter, I would like to welcome Professor Dallas English who commenced late last month in his role as Director of the Centre for MEGA Epidemiology. Also, Professor Robin Room commenced in his role as the Chair of Social Research in Alcohol based principally at Turning Point. Robin gave an outstanding Dean's lecture last week which clearly indicated the tremendous value that he is going to bring to the level of science-informed social
policy development and debate around alcohol in Victoria and Australia.

The Diabetes Vaccine Development Centre has been recently reviewed by NHMRC and this was extremely positive. Although final decisions have not yet been made, it is looking very encouraging that the DVDC will be funded into the future. It may well be, however, that the DVDC will move with its next stage of development to a location outside the University of Melbourne but this remains to be determined. In the meantime, the valuable contribution that David Irving and his staff are making not just to DVDC but to the School generally will continue in the transition.

The University continues to debate both through the Curriculum Commission and at the Faculty level, the shape of future undergraduate degree programs, and strong arguments have been made from within our Faculty for a sixth undergraduate degree, namely a Bachelor of Human Bioscience or equivalent. In addition, knowledge transfer and how it can be best enhanced and recognised both within and outside the University is the focus of a Committee chaired by Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor Vijoleta Braach-Maksyvitis, into which both the Dean and I have substantial input. At the School level, Ian Anderson has taken responsibility to help us move forward from our special planning day of last month in terms of bringing together a small working group to formulate how the School of Population Health will move forward under the Growing Esteem new agenda. Professor John Hopper has taken up his role as the Chair of the School's Research Committee, and he will be meeting with Heads of all Centres and Units and those within the Centres/Units who have responsibility for research to help inform his Committee in thinking about how research development might proceed within the School.

We were delighted to learn last week that David Studdert had been successful in his application for a Federation Fellowship, jointly sponsored by the Faculties of Law and MDHS. David will be co-located with the Law School and the School of Population Health when he commences in 2007. He will hold the second Federation Fellowship to be awarded to a researcher working in the School of Population Health.

His program of work will be 'Using law to improve population health and the quality of health care services'.

Associate Professor David Studdert is joint Leader in the Harvard School of Public Health's Law and Public Health Program. He is also a barrister and solicitor, admitted to the Supreme Court of Victoria. He has been instrumental in building and running health law programs at two US institutions. In 1998, he launched a RAND Corporation health law initiative jointly backed by RAND Health and RAND's Institute for Civil Justice.

In 2000, he returned to Harvard following a series of high-profile studies of legal disputes between patients and health insurers and a contract with the State of California to analyse the effectiveness of involuntary treatment laws for the mentally ill.

Associate Professor Studdert will return to Australia to build a world-class research capacity in empirical health law at The University of Melbourne and foster innovative scholarship nationally in this area. He aims to address improvements in health care quality, regulation and population health. His research program will combine methods from the social and statistical sciences with traditional legal analysis to explore a set of pressing policy issues at the intersection of legal and health systems in Australia. Specifically, he will investigate:

--medical negligence litigation, consumer complaints and the gradual
diminution in quality of care that these events may expose
--innovative approaches to compensation and dispute resolution in
accident compensation schemes for workplace and automobile injury
--the role and impact of coronial investigations in injury
prevention, and
--the clash of law and science in litigation over severe birth
injuries.

Professor Studdert completed his PhD in Health Policy at the Harvard
School of Public Health. He has acted as a consultant for, and served
on advisory committees with, government, the insurance industry and
the health care and legal professions.

He has received several prestigious awards, including the Independent
Scientist Award (KO2) from the National Institutes of Health and the
Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (2000-04) and the Alice S
Hersh New Investigator Award from Academy Health (2004) for young
outstanding health services researchers.

3. Teaching and Learning
========================

3.1. Postgraduate News (C. Bennett)
-----------------------------------

3.2. Undergraduate News (M. Guillemin)
--------------------------------------

3.3. RHD News (J. Fisher)
-------------------------

3.4. SPH Postgraduate Group – “Lofty Thoughts” (eds. Jennifer Stone
and Kelsi Kriitmaa, Co-Presidents)
-------------------------------------------------------------

*3.5. SPH Academic Programs Office (Liz Lagias)
-----------------------------------------------
The following operational changes that have been recently implemented
in APO. This is by no means a complete list of our responsibilities
and only serves to clarify who you should be dealing with in relation
to prospective and current students and alumni.

Academic Programs Manager - Elizabeth Lagias
All Prospective enquiries, selection, and admissions for all
Postgraduate Courses
Email: sph-gradinfo@unimelb.edu.au
Alumni
Student Progress (Board of Examiners, At risk, Unsatisfactory
Progress)

Academic Programs Officer (Postgraduate) - Caitlin Raynor
Email: C.Raynor@unimelb.edu.au
All current students (enrolment to graduation) All Postgraduate
Courses

A reminder that Caitlin Raynor is currently on leave returning Monday
22nd May. In her absence please refer all queries to Elizabeth
Lagias, Academic Programs Manager on 8344 9339 or
elagias@unimelb.edu.au.

4. Research Committee News
===========================
The first meeting Chaired by Prof John Hopper was held 17/5/06. See
also, reference in HOS News section 2.
Committee members are: Deb Warr, Catherine Bennett, Kit Fairley,
Doreen Rosenthal, David Irving, Harry Minas, Jane Pirkis. Anne Kavanagh, Mark Jenkins, Martha Morrow, Rob Carter, Terry Nolan. If you have anything you'd like discussed at the committee please contact one of the members.

A series of "Work in Progress" sessions will be held soon -- notifications will be sent via email from Prof Hopper's office, watch this space!! The series will be a relaxed, informal lunchtime seminar that gives researchers a chance to speak about ongoing studies with a peer group which has a variety of interests. The emphasis will be on discussion of ongoing work, allowing examination from a variety of perspectives. Will be held fortnightly Thursday 12noon. If interested in presenting your "Work in Progress" please contact Nick Osborne, nos@unimelb.edu.au

5. Centres/Units News
=====================  

*5.1 School Office (L.Taylor)
----------------------------

4.1.1 Environment, Health and Safety Audit

The annual SafetyMAP audit was conducted on Wednesday 26 April 2006 and covered the Centre for Health and Society and the Key Centre for Women's Health in Society. A number of areas for improvement (AFIs) were identified including risk assessment/management for travel and research activities and staff training needs analysis. These areas will be addressed with assistance from the Faculty EHS Coordinator - Alison Hunt-Sturmann. A "close-out" audit will be conducted later this year which will allow the AFIs to be converted conformance. Thanks to Doug Scobie and Felice Rocca for their input to this process.

There is general concern throughout the University that SafetyMAP requirements have not been given sufficient attention by Faculties/Schools/departments. As a result performance in the internal and external EHS audits will be included in the Faculty Operational Performance Reviews in 2006 and the outcomes will be reported at the University Planning and Budget Committee. In addition reviews of any management units in 2006 will include a report on the implementation of the EHS system and include data from the internal and external EHS audits.

5.1.2 Appointment of Manager VicHealth Centre for the Promotion of Mental Health & Social Wellbeing

We have recently advertised and successfully interviewed for the position of Manager for the VicHealth Centre for the Promotion of Mental Health & Social Wellbeing. We hope to announce more details about this appointment shortly.

5.1.3 Costing and Pricing of Research

Prior to 2006 research overheads were set at 20% for on-campus departments and 15% for off-campus departments. From 1 January 2006 there has been no central overhead charged so Centres and Units will receive the full amount of revenue for the project including any overheads or infrastructure costs built into the approved budget. However the new University Funding Model has cost drivers associated with total research income and operating turnover which means the School's operating grant is effectively taxed on the revenue generated by these contracts. In order to off-set the reduced revenue to the School (and Faculty) the following policy has been adopted.

As a minimum the Faculty requires 20% of direct costs to be recovered from the client for overheads/infrastructure. There is general recognition that 20% overheads does not fully match the real cost of
research and so the Faculty is keen to increase the overhead component to make a more realistic contribution to its research effort and as such recommends that researchers negotiate the overheads for new contracts to be 30% or more. This cost recovery is to be distributed between the Faculty and the School.

The two most common scenarios requiring the calculation of indirect costs/overhead charges are:

- The researcher is responding to a call for tender and is potentially competing for the tender with the private sector
- Calculation of cash and in-kind contributions to a project

To summarise the School’s position it is recommended that a minimum charge of 20% and where possible a charge of 30% overhead/infrastructure be factored into the budget for research projects.

In some cases the recovery of overheads from a research sponsor is not possible, and as a result the project budget will be based on direct costs only. These situations include:

- Granting schemes listed on the Australian Competitive grants (ACG) Register, sometimes also referred to as Category 1 grants
  (Australian Government policy precludes charging “indirect” or “overhead” costs on ACG-funded projects)
- Research undertaken for charitable organisations
- Postgraduate student research projects that are governed by the terms of a student project (studentship) agreement
- The contract research undertaken for an organisation that will not fund indirect/overhead costs.

In these cases, the approval of the Head of School and Associate Dean Commercialisation (Professor Eric Reynolds) must be obtained.

The Costing and Pricing Form for Research (MDHS) form provides a straightforward method for calculating project budgets and the price that will be charged to the sponsor for a piece of contract research. The form is available on the MRO website (http://www.research.unimelb.edu.au/ridg/costing-pricing/).

On completion a copy of this form is to be provided to the School’s Finance and Resources Officer – Fiona Kostidis.

Please contact Fiona (x49223) or me (x49345) if you require further advice.

5.1.4 Restructure of the Chart of Accounts

Fiona Kostidis and I are working Financial Operations and the Faculty Resource Manager to review the SPH chart of accounts with the aim of providing a more consistent and accurate framework for School-wide financial reporting. SPH currently has ~ 310 active accounts to manage. Two options have been identified:

(i) change the centre/unit in Themis chart of accounts from sections within budget unit 505 to a new budget unit for each centre/unit
(ii) restructure chart of accounts within the existing budget unit 505.

The implementation of this part (ii) of this proposal has already commenced with the assistance of the Centre/Unit Managers.

5.2 Centre for Health and Society (D. Scobie)

Please note the CHS seminar by Juan Baeza to be held Thursday 25th May has been cancelled.

Next CHS seminar will be held on:

Thursday 8th June
Kyllie Cripps and Margaret Beattie
Welcome to New Staff:
Professor Dallas English joined the Centre on 24 April 2006 as Chair of Epidemiology and Biostatistics and Director.

He obtained a PhD in epidemiology from the University of Washington in Seattle, USA in 1982. From 1982 to 1999, he worked at the University of Western Australia, first in the NHMRC Research Unit in Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine, and later in the Department of Public Health. His last position there was Associate Professor. He moved to the Cancer Council Victoria in February 2000 where he was the Associate Director of the Cancer Epidemiology Centre.

Professor English has substantial experience as a cancer epidemiologist having worked in this field since 1982. While in Perth, his main research interests were in skin cancer prevention and in cancer screening. Since moving to Melbourne, he has been working on the Melbourne Collaborative Cohort Study and will continue to devote his research time to this study. He retains an appointment at the Cancer Council, where he will be located one day per week.

Staff Title Changes:
Director (Research): Professor John Hopper
Director (Learning and Teaching): Dr Catherine Bennett

New Contract Research:
The Mental Health Group of the PEU will be undertaking a new project for the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, titled Research priorities in suicide prevention: the development of a national research agenda that identifies priority areas of research to be addressed in the area of suicide prevention.

The project will be led by A/Prof Jane Pirkis and will also involve personnel from the ORYGEN Research Centre, Suicide Prevention Australia and the Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention.

Next PEU Seminar:
6 June Lucio Naccarella Why a relational perspective matters in general practice

These seminars will be held in room 405A, level 4, 207 Bouverie Street building from 12.30-1.30pm. A light snack will be served from 12 noon.

Short Courses:
Helen Jordan has delivered 4 two-day short courses in Health Program Evaluation for the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, two in Canberra and one in Brisbane and Melbourne. One more will be delivered in Adelaide during June.
The PEU will once again run the Professional Short Courses in Health Program Evaluation during June and July. Each course is held over three days and costs $680.
Short course 1 - Planning, Negotiation, Evaluation Approaches, Criteria Selection and Program Modelling will be held on 13, 14 & 15 June
Short course 2 - Data Collection, Analysis & Reporting in Health
Program Evaluation will be held on 12, 13 & 14 July.

*5.5. Key Centre for Women's Health in Society (A. Tattam)

The Key Centre’s Autumn newsletter will be available on-line from 8 May. See http://www.kcwhs.unimelb.edu.au/news/newsletters/

Key Centre Director Professor Doreen Rosenthal is on study leave until the end of June. She is visiting collaborators at the Centre for Community Health (UCLA), Stanford University and British Columbia Centre for Excellence for Women's Health.

International students at the University of Melbourne are adapting well to student life away from home, but a small cohort requires extra support to improve their wellbeing, according to a University-funded study. A report of the study of 980 undergraduate and postgraduate students was launched on 27 May by Vice Chancellor Prof Glyn Davis. Titled “A Growing Experience: the health and wellbeing of international students at the University of Melbourne,” it provides recommendations on how to improve the social connectedness and health of international students at Melbourne.

The report authors are: Professor Doreen Rosenthal, Director, Key Centre for Women’s Health in Society; Dr Jean Russell, Associate Professor and Principal Fellow, Centre for Post Compulsory Education and Lifelong Learning; and Mr Garry Thomson, Director of Health Counselling and Disability Services. A full copy is available at http://www.kcwhs.unimelb.edu.au/news/a_growing_experience.pdf

Media release

First National Conference on gender and health inequalities

Places are still available at this event featuring nationally and internationally renowned speakers.

The conference is on Thursday 22 June, 9.15-4.30pm,
Venue: Laby Theatre, School of Physics, The University of Melbourne
Cost $122 (incl GST) Registrations close 9 June.

Speakers
- Prof. Ichiro Kawachi
  (Director of the Harvard Centre for Society and Health, School of Public Health)
- Dr. Dorothy Broom
  (National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health, Australian National University)
- Prof. Gary Dowsett
  (Australian Research Centre for Sex Health & Society, La Trobe University)
- A/Prof. Anne Kavanagh
  (Key Centre for Women’s Health in Society, University of Melbourne)
- Prof. Janet McCalman
  (School of Population Health, University of Melbourne)
- Prof. Ruth Fincher
  (Dean of the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning, University of Melbourne)
- Dr. Shelley Mallett
  (Key Centre for Women’s Health in Society, University of Melbourne)
- Prof. Sue Richardson
  (Director, National Institute of Labour Studies, Flinders University)

For the full program and registrations details of this event and our other short courses go to
Short courses:
Registrations are still open for two short courses featuring Prof. Ichiro Kawachi and A/Prof SV Subramanian from the Harvard Centre for Society and Health, School of Public Health (+ others).

The Social Determinants of Health and Introduction to Multilevel Modelling short courses are now open for registration.
Social Determinants of Health
Prof Ichiro Kawachi & A/Prof SV Subramanian, Harvard School of Public Health
A/Prof Anne Kavanagh, KCWHS, School of Population Health, University of Melbourne
A/Prof Tony La Montagne, Centre for Health and Society School of Population Health, University of Melbourne.
Dates: 19–21 June 2006
Cost: $1,320/$990 full-time student. Registrations closed Friday 21 April 2006.

Introduction to Multilevel Modelling
A/Prof SV Subramanian, Harvard School of Public Health
Dates: 22 & 23 June 2006
Registration and other details at
http://www.kcwh.unimelb.edu.au/courses/shortcourses/

5.6. Diabetes Vaccine Development Centre (MJ. Gleeson)
5.7. Centre for International Mental Health (J.Burchill)
5.8. Sexual Health Unit (K.Fairley)

*4.8. Sexual Health Unit ed. Kit Fairley
New grants:


6. Seminars/Events
see http://www.sph.unimelb.edu.au/seminars/

7. IT News (N.Golovachenko)

*8. Publications (since last issue)

8.1 School

8.2 Centre for Health and Society

8.3 Centre for MEGA Epidemiology

8.4 Program Evaluation Unit
---------------------------

8.5 Key Centre for Women's Health in Society
-----------------------------------------------

8.6 Diabetes Vaccine Development Centre
---------------------------------------

8.7 Centre for International Mental Health
------------------------------------------

8.8. Sexual Health Unit ed. K.Fairley
-------------------------------------