ANNUAL ALUMNI AWARDS
Alumna Dr Jacqueline Thomas develops alternative fuel from human waste
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'This could really help deforestation, as currently virgin forest is cut down for charcoal ... and faecal sludge is something that could become valuable if there was a market for it.'
It is a pleasure to introduce myself to the UNSW Alumni community in the first issue of UNSWorld during my time as President and Vice-Chancellor. I have had a busy and enjoyable start in post, engaging with thousands of staff and students, gathering information about UNSW, consulting on future plans and enjoying this wonderful city.

A key priority during my first six months in post, has been undertaking an extensive consultation process with staff, students and alumni on the components of our 2013-2025 strategy which will shape the next phase in the development of UNSW. Thousands of contributions to an initial call for ideas in March and April, were synthesised in to a ‘Green Paper’ released in June – a discussion paper outlining strategic ideas and questions which flow from them.

There has been a gratifyingly enthusiastic response to the Green Paper with feedback from over 3,000 staff and students via written submissions or attendance at meetings. The feedback is now being developed in to a ‘White Paper’ which will be a statement of intent about key components of the full strategic plan to be published in October.

Our full strategic plan will be designed to ensure that UNSW can capitalise on the enormous changes that are occurring in the higher education sector. We are developing plans for a bold, innovative and ambitious agenda, reflecting a conviction across our university community that UNSW has the potential to achieve great things during the next decade.

Our consultation process has revealed overwhelming enthusiasm for three strategic priorities. First, a drive for academic excellence in research and education, which enhances the national and global reputation of UNSW. Second a passion for social engagement, which improves lives through advancing equality, diversity, open debate and economic progress. Third, a commitment to achieving a global impact through sharing our capability in research and education in the highest quality partnerships with both developed and emerging societies. We will take forward an ambitious and challenging agenda. I am confident that within our academic, student and alumni community we have the calibre of people needed to achieve our objectives and to mobilise the resources we require.

An important component of our plans will be doing more to develop connections and interactions with UNSW alumni. We aim to further develop the sense of a UNSW community, as a lifelong relationship starting as a student and continuing after graduation. With this in mind we recently sent out an Alumni survey, in order to find out more about our Alumni and how you can contribute to shaping the future direction of the University. The initial results were of great interest and you can read more about the survey results on pages 7 and 8.

If you missed out on the survey, it is not too late to contribute your views – we would like to hear from you. If you are doing important work in your field, if your business has capacity for industry placements for students, if you think your industry area could benefit from the work we are doing or if you have ideas and suggestions, please do get in touch with us. Your input can help us to ensure that the work of UNSW is relevant to and can make a difference to our society.

I look forward to working with many of you as we complete and start to implement an ambitious strategic plan. I hope that you enjoy this issue of UNSWorld, your alumni magazine and in particular the cover story on our wonderful Alumni Award recipients.
Dr Emma Barrett, (BPsych '03, MPsych (For) '07, PhD '12 (Public Health & Community Medicine)) of UNSW’s National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre is one of five UNSW students, graduates and staff to receive a 2015 Fulbright Scholarship to study in the United States.

This year, UNSW scooped a record number of Fulbright Scholarships, which are awarded for post-graduate, post-doctorate and professional study, tying with Monash University for the highest number selected in Australia.

Barrett will use the prestigious scholarship to collaborate with Professor Sudie Back at the Medical University of South Carolina, to develop and test an integrated psychological treatment for adolescent co-occurring traumatic stress and substance abuse.

With his post-graduate scholarship, Isaac Donnelly, a current PhD student from UNSW’s School of Mathematics and Statistics, will investigate the mathematics of network science and apply it to help predict the rapid spread of infectious diseases on airline networks, as well as minimise congestion on city roads.

Dr Renxun Chen, (BSc '08, GradCert '11 (Research Management & Commercial), PhD '12 (Chemistry)) of UNSW’s School of Chemistry will use his post-doctoral scholarship to develop novel antimicrobial chemical coatings for biomedical devices and implants such as catheters, stents and contact lenses. Infection from these devices results in high rates of death and disease.

Sean O’Toole, (MA '92 (Australian Studies)), who works for the NSW Department of Family and Community Services, will use his professional scholarship to strengthen the capability and career options for Aboriginal people working in the human services sector, building on similar experiences of American Indigenous people.

Finally, UNSW Conjoint Associate Professor Stuart Tangye, who works at the Garvan Institute, will use his Fulbright Senior Scholarship to learn the latest genome-sequencing technology and bioinformatics techniques to identify specific changes associated with immuno-deficient diseases.

UNSW WOMEN RECOGNISED

Professor Minoti Apte (PhD ’98), UNSW pancreatic cancer researcher and alumna, has been named 2015 NSW Woman of the Year for her contributions to medical research, tertiary education and the Indian community.

Apte is director of the Pancreatic Research Group (since 2001) based at the Ingham Institute for Applied Medical Research, and is a world leader in alcohol-induced pancreatic injury and pancreatic cancer – the fifth-leading cause of all cancer deaths in Australia.

“Alongside her impressive career successes, Professor Apte is an active member of the Marathi Association of Sydney, an organisation that serves Sydney’s significant Indian population,” Premier Mike Baird said when presenting Apte with the award, adding that her achievements inspire other women to follow in her footsteps.

In her acceptance speech, Apte focussed on the inequality and disadvantage women face when returning to work, but emphasized that UNSW is an exception.

“UNSW is leading the way when it comes to family-friendly workplace arrangements and supporting women who want to balance family with pursuing a career,” she says.

Jennifer Knox (BE ’91, Naval Architecture) is another UNSW alumna to gain recognition, recently selected as the first female Australian fellow of the Royal Institution of Naval Architects (RINA) in the UK, and one of only six female fellows worldwide. Knox was the first naval architect to practise in Australia when she started 25 years ago.
Do you want to work for one of the most desirable companies in Australia? Then go to UNSW. According to the professional networking site, LinkedIn, these companies hired UNSW graduates ahead of any other Australian university. LinkedIn identified the 30 most in-demand employers in 2015, based on LinkedIn member awareness of a company and engagement with that company’s pages and employee profiles. RioTinto, Google, BHPBilliton, Microsoft, Leighton, Qantas, Apple, Chevron, LendLease and Thiess topped this list. These companies’ HR teams preferred to hire UNSW graduates over all other Australian university graduates, which, in order of preference after UNSW, included University of Technology Sydney, The University of Sydney, Monash University and The University of Queensland.

In the introductory video, a refugee named Narayan recalls the PTSD-related nightmares and flashbacks he experienced before he sought treatment. “I encourage all my fellow refugees to tell your stories from your heart and mind so you can be free and lead a happy life,” he says.

UNSW clinical psychologist and Program Director Dr Angela Nickerson says the prevalence of PTSD in refugees is five times higher than the general population in Australia. “The negative beliefs that many men hold about their own PTSD symptoms are a key barrier to accessing evidence-based interventions. We hope this program will help them overcome this barrier,” says Nickerson.

The digital intervention will include interactive activities to educate users about PTSD and support them to develop personalized plans for seeking help.
I am delighted to share with you two important initiatives that will soon come to life: our first UNSW Alumni Entrepreneurs’ Forum, and a special competition ahead of the fundraising appeal to ensure the long-overdue redevelopment of our beloved Roundhouse.

Having had the opportunity to meet alumni across many countries, the idea of an entrepreneurs’ forum grew, and plans are now underway to hold the first-ever Entrepreneurs’ Forum in the USA on 24 and 25 June next year. We hope to attract social, business and technical entrepreneur alumni who have successfully launched start-up companies in different parts of the world.

For many of our UNSW graduates, the Roundhouse – the first building at UNSW, and in Australia, dedicated to the student experience – holds a unique place in their memories of student days. Many alumni affectionately recall meeting their lifelong partners here, making lifetime friendships, listening to the next big band or great debates, having their first “drink” and attending international and Bacchus balls.

When it was built in 1961, the Roundhouse was outside the square of traditional university buildings, reflecting UNSW’s position as a pace-setter dedicated to the delivery of an exciting and contemporary student experience. It has been an amazing home for our students that continues to drive UNSW today, but the Roundhouse is currently looking unloved. I have had the privilege of taking a few of our international alumni on tours around it. They have commented that it is still in its original condition and appears musty and tired when compared to the rest of our campus, which has a very modern feel.

Interestingly, the Roundhouse still plays an important role in student life. It is still the centre of their UNIverse, but in desperate need of a facelift. We want future generations of students to experience an iconic Roundhouse, which is the epicentre of student life, creativity, networks and start-ups. When they recall their days at UNSW as alumni, we want them to think about University has recently announced a major redevelopment of the Roundhouse and its precinct, which still needs to be augmented by a significant fundraising appeal, for both the Roundhouse and the student experience at UNSW. Whilst we still need to secure all the funding, the work will revitalise the existing building, create more student spaces and open the Roundhouse up as the gateway between Anzac Parade and the lower campus, which adjoins the site of the new UNSW light-rail station.

The Roundhouse holds many memories and stories, and to celebrate its major rejuvenation, we are launching a competition called “Stories from the Roundhouse”. We encourage you to enter by sending us your favourite Roundhouse stories, recollections and pictures. We will use some of these stories during our Roundhouse Fundraising Appeal and others will feature in the newly refurbished Roundhouse building.

See details at alumni.unsw.edu.au/roundhousestories

For many of our UNSW graduates, the Roundhouse holds a unique place in their memories of student days. Many alumni affectionately recall meeting their lifelong partners here, making lifetime friendships, listening to the next big band...
UNSW Alumni Survey

Recently we put the call out for your help in filling out a survey with the aim to get to know you a bit better and find out what you want from us. This is what we learnt about you.

There were 14,481 respondents from 120 countries. The top 10 countries were:

1. Australia 11,493
2. Singapore 333
3. Hong Kong 313
4. USA 296
5. Malaysia 253
6. Indonesia 236
7. China 232
8. United Kingdom 163
9. Thailand 112
10. New Zealand 90

Respondents CONNECTED MOST TO...
- 25% University as a whole
- 18% Department / School
- 10% Faculty
- 9% Lecture(s) / Professor(s)
- 6% Alumni Networks
- 4% Physical campus
- 3% Residential college
- 2% Student hub
- 1% Sports club(s)

Respondents AGE PROFILE & GENDER
- 25% Male
- 25% Female
- 17% 60+
- 25% less than 30
- 33% 30-45
- 17% 46-60

Impact of UNSW
- 75% Improving critical thinking
- 67% Preparing you for your career
- 56% Advancing your career

Benefits gained from connection to UNSW
- 1 Being associated with the University’s reputation
- 2 Staying in contact with friends
- 3 Being part of the University community – access to network of alumni, staff and partners

You love being associated with UNSW.
**TOP 5 THINGS YOU WANT TO HEAR FROM US ABOUT**

1. News from your Faculty or School
2. University news and events
3. Research developments
4. Events
5. Continuing education

**TOP 5 THINGS YOU ARE INTERESTED IN ATTENDING**

1. Lectures and seminars
2. Career development or professional networking events
3. Class or faculty reunions
4. General social events
5. Alumni receptions with key university staff

**WE TAKE PRIDE IN OUR ALUMNI COMMUNITY BECAUSE...**

You have an overall positive view of UNSW, so much so that you recommend UNSW to family and friends.

**TOP 5 THINGS YOU WANT TO HEAR FROM US ABOUT**

1. News from your Faculty or School
2. University news and events
3. Research developments
4. Events
5. Continuing education

**YOUR FEELINGS ON UNSW**

- **92%** Very Positive
- **6%** Neutral
- **1%** Negative
- **1%** Unsure

**WHAT MAKES YOU TICK**

- **70%** Travel
- **53%** Fitness & Wellbeing
- **41%** The Arts
- **52%** Family Activities
- **51%** Food & Wine

**WE TAKE PRIDE IN OUR ALUMNI COMMUNITY BECAUSE...**

You have a real interest in the future direction of UNSW.

**Thank you to all alumni who participated in the Alumni Survey**
I’m very excited about this,” says Professor Merlin Crossley, Dean of Science. “Of all the research I’ve ever done, this is the most generally applicable to other diseases, plants and animals. “A new age of genome editing is beginning, now that single genes within our vast genome can be precisely cut and repaired.”

The work was published in Nature Communications in May, and describes a project carried out in his laboratory at the School of Biotechnology and Biomolecular Sciences (BABS). Crossley and his five researchers used a brand-new technique of genome editing to introduce a naturally occurring genetic mutation that could help cure sickle anaemia (a disorder affecting haemoglobin-carrying red blood cells).

“This is when you introduce a specific DNA-cutting module along with a piece of repair DNA, carrying the change you want to incorporate,” he explains. “When the original DNA gets cut, the cell replaces it with the donor DNA.”
Darning socks
Crossley likens this technique of genome editing to darning socks: “The strategy is for the cell to grab any available spare DNA that seems to match the damaged DNA and to stitch it in as a replacement, just as you might darn a red pair of socks with any red wool that you find lying about in the cupboard.”

Crossley and his researchers didn’t invent the editing technique itself, but they have shown in laboratory conditions that the mutation they introduced restored haemoglobin levels. It does this by switching on a dormant gene that is active in the womb (which babies use to get oxygen from their mother’s blood), but turns off in most people after birth.

About five per cent of the global population are healthy carriers of one defective adult haemoglobin gene for sickle cell anaemia. But when a child has both a mother and a father with those genes, that’s when they will develop sickle cell anaemia or thalassemia, and face a life of blood transfusions and medication.

About 300,000 babies are born every year with these genetic diseases, most commonly in South-East Asia, the Middle East and Africa, and immigrants from those backgrounds in developed countries such as Australia, according to the World Health Organisation.

The UNSW researchers’ approach focuses on the fact that a small number of people with two damaged adult haemoglobin genes also have their foetal haemoglobin gene still “switched on”. This protects them and means they do not suffer the effects of sickle cell anaemia or thalassemia. So Crossley’s team introduced this beneficial mutant gene and reproduced this effect in the laboratory.

So far, Crossley’s team has not done this in human stem cells. If it does work effectively on a patient’s cells and is safe, Crossley says it will offer significant advantages over conventional gene therapy.

Until now, scientists have used genetic engineering to add new healthy genes, called transgenes, using viruses to herd them into a cell to stand in for the damaged ones in a plant, animal or stem cell. With Crossley’s genome-editing technique, they don’t need to introduce any new or artificial material. Instead, they mimic what is a naturally occurring, beneficial mutation.

Depending how well this works in stem cells, this technique could become a treatment for sickle cell anaemia and thalassemia within a decade, Crossley says.

His study was led by UNSW PhD student Beeke Wienert, with colleagues at the University of Sydney, the University of Melbourne, Murdoch Children’s Research Institute, and Stanford University.

“Genome editing is also applicable to animals and crops. Using this technique, we can introduce beneficial mutant genes to engineer better plants to feed the world, create more efficient sheep and cattle resistant to disease.”
Ethical issues

Crossley stresses that using this technique, offspring wouldn’t inherit the genetic changes made to the cells. At the same time, he says that his research would never involve engineering human embryos (especially because it is unethical and illegal in Australia), but rather focus on curing diseases and conditions such as HIV. This ethical dimension is significant, he adds, and currently the topic of heated debate in the international scientific community, especially in light of recent controversial Chinese research published in April this year.

In this study, lead author Junjiu Huang, from Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou, made headlines globally, claiming his team had edited DNA in the nuclei of human embryos for the very first time. In an interview, Huang admitted that both the world’s foremost scientific journals – *Nature* and *Science* – had rejected his research paper, partly for ethical reasons.

Huang’s team experimented on 86 one-cell human embryos, all collected from IVF clinics, which had chromosomal defects and could not develop into babies. But his results published in a little-known European journal called *Protein and Cell* were not spectacular; only four of the embryos were successfully modified.

A few months earlier, in an opinion piece published in *Nature* in March, some of the world’s leading genetic scientists had already called for a moratorium on gene-editing research in cells that can form human embryos.

Rather than genetically engineering humans, Crossley argues, researchers could also tackle the world hunger crisis. “Genome editing is also applicable to animals and crops,” he says. “Using this technique, we can introduce beneficial mutant genes to engineer better plants to feed the world, create more efficient sheep and cattle resistant to disease.”

Crossley says that with this method, scientists will now be able to target and repair specific diseases and dimensions of flora and fauna, with a single, targeted and permanent change – although they will not be able to deal with destructive diseases such as cancers using this method.
‘Keep striving and never give up’ was something of a recurring theme at this year’s Alumni Awards dinner, held to honour UNSW graduates who have made an outstanding contribution to the community, writes Melinda Ham.

On a mid-May evening, under an illuminated marquee on the lawns of Alumni Park, more than 180 guests gathered for the Alumni Awards dinner, an annual event to honour a select few graduates of science, law, arts, engineering, design, medicine and business.

Eleven former students – whose years of graduation spanned half a century, from 1962 to 2012 – received the 2014/2015 awards. All of them had forged remarkable careers, made outstanding contributions to the community and felt that being part of UNSW was a lifelong identity, said Professor Ian Jacobs, UNSW President and Vice-Chancellor. Reading through the list of recipients gave him “a glow of pride.”
Never give up

Chancellor David Gonski read the citation for Dr Maha Sinnathamby (BE ’66), winner of the Design, Engineering and Sustainability Award, and said that he and Jacobs believed that Sinnathamby was “one of Australia’s greatest minds”.

In his acceptance speech, Sinnathamby spoke about his humble beginnings: growing up in a village outside Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, with no electricity and little running water, studying under a kerosene lamp. When he came to Australia to study civil engineering at UNSW, Sinnathamby said he struggled to survive, driving taxis at night and on weekends.

After graduating, he worked as an engineer for a decade, including a placement with the World Bank, and then ventured into property development.

“I learned the art of overcoming failures,” Sinnathamby said. “It is failures that make you strong. If you fail once, if you fail twice, just keep going; never, never give up. Tomorrow is going to be a better day.”

In 1992, he and his business partner bought 2,860 hectares southwest of Brisbane, and in the ensuing 20 years, created Greater Springfield – Australia’s newest city. The development has won accolades, including the 2010 International Real Estate Federation’s World’s Best Master Planned Community. The city has attracted more than $11 billion in public and private investment.
Passion for UNSW

Another accomplished award recipient, this time in the International Alumni Volunteer category, was Peter Hearl (BCom ‘73), applauded for his pivotal involvement with UNSW’s American alumni community. Hearl was the honorary Chairman of the US-based UNSW Study Abroad-Friends and US Alumni Inc. until 2014. He and his wife also sponsor three scholarships for undergraduate and postgraduate students to study in the US, and for a reciprocal exchange.

Hearl talked fondly of his time at UNSW, an enthusiasm he said all the Alumni Award recipients share.

“It is failures that make you strong. If you fail once, if you fail twice, just keep going; never, never give up. Tomorrow is going to be a better day.”

DR MAHA SINNATHAMBY

Hearl is currently a Non-Executive Director (NED) of Telstra Ltd, and an NED of global wine company, Treasury Wine Estates. He began his career three decades ago in the oil industry with Esso Australia Ltd, a subsidiary of Exxon. At his retirement in 2008, Hearl was global Chief Operating & Development Officer for Yum! Brands.

The Medicine and Health Award winner, Dr Bronwyn Gould (MB BS ‘76, DipPaed ‘87, MPM ‘00), also recalled her UNSW student days: “The ’70s were a great time to be here; student activism, social justice and a general atmosphere of an exciting new world.”

Gould has worked as a GP with vulnerable young people for 35 years. She established and provided on-site medical care at Lou’s Place in Darlington for homeless women and children.

Gonski also commended the joint winners of the Sports and Sports Administration Award for their contribution to the sporting community.

A culture of giving

Many award recipients, including Glenn Keys (BE ’85 UNSW Canberra at ADFA), who won the Business and Innovation Award, have also become philanthropists.

Keys is the co-founder and executive director of Aspen Medical, a global provider of outsourced healthcare. He has created a philanthropic foundation giving a significant percentage of the company’s profits to charities. At the same time, he also created and chairs Project Independence, a housing program for people with intellectual disabilities, which he launched this year.

Dr Luca Belgiorno-Nettis (BSc (Arch) ’78, BArch ’80), who won the Social Impact Award, is CEO of the organisation that delivers Project Independence.
and Public Policy Award, is best known for supporting Australia’s art and culture, chairing the Sydney Biennale for 14 years. A decade ago, he also established the New Democracy Foundation, a not-for-profit research organisation focusing on political reform.

Dr Melissa Chiu (MArtAdm ’95), the director of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, part of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC, won the Art and Culture Award. She is the founding Director of the Asia-Australia Arts Centre in Sydney, a non-profit contemporary art centre promoting dialogue in the Asia-Pacific between curators, artists, writers and filmmakers. She could not attend the awards.

James Hoa Phuc Nguyen (BCom ’04, LLB ’04) was the final award recipient of the evening, who jointly received the Young Alumni Award with Corrin Varady (BCom ’06, MCom ’08). Varady could not attend, but his father, Miklos, also an alumnus, received the award in his place.

Corrin Varady has established the World Youth Education Trust, which is building a fully digital, gifted and talented school in Tanzania for 1000 students. He is also the African director of the African Digital Education Trust, which has partnered with Virgin Galactic and Google Education to train teachers and students to use technology in the classroom.

Nguyen is a legal counsel at Rabobank, and also involved with UNSWLaw’s alumni network and the Ngoc Tram Nguyen Scholarship – targeted at Southwestern Sydney students in financial need. Nguyen initiated an annual fundraising dinner, now in its fourth year, which has contributed substantially to the $450,000 raised to date, with three scholarships endowed and two more in progress.

When he addressed his fellow award recipients, Nguyen encouraged them all to strive for even higher goals: “You are doing amazing things. Keep fighting the good fight. We believe in you and we believe in your vision.”

Jacqueline Thomas (BA ’07, BSc(Hons) ’07, PhD ’12) – the Science and Technology Alumni Award winner – became fascinated with microbiology as a student in the science lab at North Sydney Girls High.

“I was very excited that a whole microbial world existed in parallel to the world we saw day-to-day,” she says. Little did she know that this early fascination would lead to three degrees at UNSW and a career in water research in Tanzania.

Thomas, aged 32, is now a senior scientist at the Ifakara Health Institute, East Africa’s largest independent research institute. She’s spent more than a year working on household-level water and faecal sludge treatment.

One team is using a process called pyrolysis, whereby agricultural waste and dried faecal sludge is burnt in the absence of oxygen to create biochar. Their research is exploring how biochar can replace traditional charcoal and may soon enable a new energy source for households in the developing world.

“This could really help deforestation, as currently virgin forest is cut down for charcoal,” Thomas says. “And faecal sludge is something that could become valuable if there was a market for it.”

In addition to research work in the lab and field, her role also involves scouting for international funding and collaborators, and empowering young African researchers.

In her decade studying at UNSW, Thomas immersed herself in student politics with the Student Guild, the Student Union, helped organise fundraising events and worked behind the bar at the Roundhouse. As a postgraduate, she was a tutor and mentor. She spent a year at the United States Environmental Protection Agency in Cincinnati, supported by an American Australian Association Fellowship and an Australian Postgraduate Award.

After completing a double Arts and Science degree and transitioning into Environmental Engineering for her doctorate, Thomas started working on water in remote Aboriginal communities. In 2013, she jumped at an opportunity to assist a non-governmental organisation bring affordable water, sanitation and hygiene technology to rural areas in Tanzania. This led to her current work at the Ifakara Health Institute.

Thomas is particularly passionate about developing equal partnerships between African and Western scientists, so that both benefit. In many instances, Western researchers make little investment in their African relationships: “They come, they use us, get their data and they leave,” she says.
From Spitfires to Concorde

John Russell Baxter left a significant bequest to the University after a career in aeronautical engineering, that goes way back to the time he flew Spitfires during World War II, writes Melinda Ham.

As children, Roger and John Baxter have fond memories of taking the controls of a single-engine Piper Cherokee, whilst flying from Bankstown airport near Sydney with their father, John Russell “Russ” Baxter.

At the time, their dad was well into a career in aeronautical engineering and needed to maintain his hours to keep his commercial pilot’s license.

Russ didn’t tell his sons the details of flying Spitfires in World War II until his later years, although this early experience fuelled his passion for aircraft and led to an international career in aeronautical engineering.

Although Russ never studied at UNSW, his son John (BEng ’75 (Mechanical), PhD ’80) did, becoming a mechanical engineer. Russ had a lot of respect for UNSW’s engineering program and left the University a generous bequest totalling $1.5 million.

Russ was part of a group of former WWII pilots who created the Spitfire Memorial Defence Fellowship at UNSW Canberra at ADFA, which awarded its first scholarship in 2000, and has had 14 recipients since that time.

The fellowships provide a perpetual memorial to the wartime contribution of the Spitfire and to those associated with the operation of this strategically important airplane. Research projects must aid the defence of Australia.

Russ also established the Baxter Family Postgraduate Scholarship in 2003. A total of $15,000 annually is awarded for three years to a full-time PhD student in Engineering.
“Father never wanted to talk about the war, and the horrendous fact that when the Spitfire pilots set off into battle, only half of them usually came back.”

Spitfire escapades
As a young man from Geelong, just 20 years old, Russ Baxter enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force in October 1942.

In a detailed interview given to the Spitfire Association shortly before his death, Russ recounted how he didn’t see action until June 1944 – right after the D-Day invasion – when he began flying regularly, often at low altitude, over France and the Low Countries, doing sweeps and bomber escorts.

Only three months later, having just escorted a group of American B26 bombers to destroy the bridge at Arnhem, Russ faced an emergency on the way back to base. “I noted that my oil pressure had dropped to zero, so I called ‘Mayday’ and was directed to Brussels for an emergency landing, but my engine blew up on the way,” he said.

Although he extinguished the flames, Russ lifted a wing to avoid a pylon as he landed in a field. “When I descended I tried to flare out for touchdown, the aircraft mushed and struck the ground tail-first, breaking the fuselage in half just behind the cockpit,” he said.

Russ suffered a crushed spinal disc and was put in body plaster once he reached a field hospital. He wasn’t fit to fly again until March 1945, just weeks before the end of the war. However, he was involved in the occupation after the war and recalled flying low over the Brandenburg Gate in formation; the Spitfire pilots were told to make a loud roar – to let the Germans know who was now in charge.

After the war, Russ received a 1939–45 Star, France & Germany Star, Defence Medal and an Australian Service Medal.

A career with planes
Russ had enlisted part-way through his aeronautical engineering degree at the University of Melbourne. He finished his degree at the University of Sydney in 1948.

Russ’ postwar career kicked off at Trans Australia Airways (TAA), where he flew a DC3 as first officer on early morning flights between Essendon and Devonport, King Island and Flinders Island, bringing back loads of fresh apples.

He later joined the Aeronautical Research Laboratory (ARL) in Fishermans Bend in Melbourne, which became a division of the Commonwealth Defence Science and Technology Organisation. Among many projects, he helped develop early visual landing aids for aircraft, systems still in wide use around the world today.

In the early 1960s, Russ worked on assignment at de Havilland UK, and also at British Aerospace/Aerospatiale on their joint development of the Concorde supersonic jetliner at Bristol and Toulouse.

“I remember sitting up on the roof of the UNSW engineering building and watching the Concorde come in to land during test flights at Mascot,” John recalls, proud that his dad had played a part in the development.

In 1965, Russ joined Qantas engineering in Sydney and also spent time in Western Australia, fire-spotting over the eucalypt forests in a Cessna 337.

From 1972, he was Qantas’ engineering specialist representative at Boeing’s Everett manufacturing plant, based in Seattle, USA. He became a private aeronautical engineering consultant in 1976, until his retirement in 1985. His sons describe him as “a typical engineer; ever methodical and precise”.

Find out more about leaving a gift to UNSW in your will.
Email j.e.hall@unsw.edu.au

ROBERT SHEARER: Scholarship recipient
Since 2013, PhD student Robert Shearer has received the Baxter Family Postgraduate Scholarship. Working at the Garvan Institute in Darlinghurst, he is researching how cells regulate their protein and how errors in this system might contribute to cancer growth.

“The real significance of the scholarship is that I can focus all my time on research and don’t have to worry about a part-time job to pay my rent,” 29-year-old Shearer says. “I am really grateful to the Baxter family, as the scholarship has given me independence and made so much difference to my life.”
It was smiles all round on the University lawn when UNSW awarded three Indigenous students doctorates in mid-June. Dr Megan Williams from UNSW Medicine, Associate Professor Sue Green from UNSW Arts & Social Sciences and Cameron Fitzpatrick-Ramirez from the UNSW Business School all graduated.

“This is unheard of anywhere in the country,” said Professor Martin Nakata, the Director of UNSW’s Indigenous Programs Unit, Nura Gili.

Later this year, Shane Ingrey, a fourth PhD graduate in Biomedicine, will join their ranks. This follows Dr Simon Graham’s graduation with a doctorate in medicine late last year.

Four Indigenous law students also graduated this June, and Professor David Dixon, Dean of Law commended their achievements. “UNSW Law’s Aboriginal graduates join a proud tradition of alumni who include Australia’s first three judicial officers (the first Indigenous judge, first Indigenous female barrister and first Indigenous federal court judge),” he said.

At the same ceremony, former Australian of the Year and renowned AFL player, Adam Goodes, was awarded an honorary Doctor of Letters, the University’s highest honour, for his “dedication to reconciliation and his distinguished service to the community”. A total of 59 Indigenous students graduated from UNSW in 2014 across all faculties, 18 more than in the previous year. This included six Indigenous doctors, a record number of medical graduates. There are currently 49 students enrolled in the medical program at UNSW – the highest number in the country.

“When I became dean of UNSW Medicine 10 years ago, I said I wanted to make UNSW the leading medical school in the country, training more indigenous doctors than any other medical school in Australia,” said Professor Peter Smith, UNSW Medicine’s Dean. “And now we are doing that.”

Each student has been a residential scholar at Shalom College, while three doctors have graduated from the Balnaves Foundation Indigenous Medical Scholarship program and five more are currently supported.

Khyarne Biles is one graduate now returning to Dubbo, her hometown, to begin her medical career. “I am an outgoing, proud and hardworking Aboriginal woman who is committed to making a difference to the health outcomes of my people,” she said.

Murray Haar, returning to do his internship in Albury-Wodonga, was indebted to the other graduates: “The support and friendship of my fellow Indigenous medical students had a resounding impact on my ability to succeed through the program – we encouraged one another through some very tough and trying times and carried each other to the finish line.”
We were deeply saddened to hear that Dr Ben Chng (BBuild ’67, HonDUniv ’10) died suddenly from a heart attack in January 2015.

Ben was a quiet achiever who loved his family and worked tirelessly for his local community and friends. He was one of our dearest graduates, grateful for the opportunities his UNSW qualifications afforded him during his career.

Speaking during UNSW’s 60th Anniversary celebrations in 2009, Ben said that his University experience taught him many life lessons. “At University I learned not only about my area of specialisation, but also the value of tenacity and perseverance. The sound education I received and valuable experiences helped mould my character.”

As a devoted alumnus of the University, he served as President of the UNSW Singapore Alumni Chapter. In 2010, he was recognised with the highest honour, Doctor of the University honoris causa, for his professional achievements and extensive community work.

Throughout his career with WT Partnership in Australia and Asia, Ben made significant contributions to the building industry. Since its establishment in 1962 in Singapore, WT Partnership has taken part in the dramatic expansion of building construction and civil engineering projects in the Far East and South-East Asia.

Right up until his death, Ben was also the principal of MRBC Partnership, Brunei, a quantity surveying consultant to the Brunei Ministry of Development.

He was also deeply involved with his community at various times, serving as a council member to the Singapore Cancer Society and St. John’s Ambulance Brigade, as a president of Rotary Club of Singapore-West (1975-1976), and a chartered member of Rotary Club of Sentosa. He was elected district governor for Rotary International District 3310 overseeing Rotary Clubs in Singapore and Malaysia (1994-1995).

Over the years, Ben and his wife Lily were regular guests at the annual Alumni Awards and Town and Gown dinners. At one event in 2009, he pulled up outside the Scientia Building in a pale blue Volkswagen Beetle, similar to the one he drove during his UNSW student days. Ben fondly recounted a road trip he and Lily took to the Blue Mountains in his little Beetle nearly five decades earlier.

Because he had struggled financially at UNSW, Ben said he did not want other students to face the same hardship. “As a private student who was not on a scholarship, the financial burden to support myself meant that many sacrifices had to be made in terms of non-participation at social functions organised by the University or by student clubs,” he said.

So Ben’s memory will live on through the Lily and Dr Ben K C Chng Scholarship, that enables Singaporean students from disadvantaged backgrounds to study at UNSW’s Built Environment Faculty.

When Professor Alec Tzannes, Dean of Built Environment, awarded the scholarship at May’s prize ceremony, he said he was filled with both sadness and admiration. “Ben was a distinguished alumnus and one of our first Singaporean students in what was then called the Bachelor of Building. Following the completion of his studies with us, Ben returned to Singapore and enjoyed a long and very successful career.”

We will all remember Ben with great fondness as an outstanding, yet humble and gracious man, who did all he could to make a positive difference every day in his own quiet way.

Ben is survived by Lily and their children John, Joanne and Angeline, and their partners and seven grandchildren.

Written by Stergitsa Zamagas-Hill, Director Alumni and External Engagement
Stephanie Pow is part of an extensive UNSW family tree that spans Australia, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Malaysia. Eighteen members of her family graduated from the University over four decades, gaining a total of 23 degrees, two diplomas and two University medals. Stephanie herself won the University Medal in Finance in 2009.

Her father (Elson Pow) and his siblings and parents emigrated from Taiwan to Australia in 1964. Stephanie’s mother (Gek Poh Tong) and two of her siblings came to Australia from Malaysia in the 1970s to study at UNSW.

Along with his two
The Pow family

Tong family

ELSON POW
BCom’77 LLB’78

GEK POH POW (TONG)
BCom’73

GEK SIN TONG
BOpt’73

BEN HOU TONG
BE’77 (Electrical) MCom’81

MARY TONG

JOHN POW
MCom’81

ELIZABETH POOLEY

EMILY POW
BPlan’11

RACHEL POW
BA’12 BSW’12

ELSON POW

BCom’77 LLB’78

GEK POH POW (TONG)
BCom’73

GEK SIN TONG
BOpt’73

BEN HOU TONG
BE’77 (Electrical) MCom’81

MARY TONG

JOHN POW
MCom’81

ELIZABETH POOLEY

EMILY POW
BPlan’11

RACHEL POW
BA’12 BSW’12

brothers and a sister, Elson also attended UNSW. He played inter-varsity volleyball and was selected for the Australian universities team in 1976. Stephanie’s sister, Cynthia, carried on the family sporting tradition, representing UNSW in the Eastern University Games in tennis.

Stephanie’s cousin, Daryl Kay – who won the University medal for Civil Engineering in 1998 – met his wife, Karen, at UNSW. “Karen is ambidextrous and legend has it that she used to simultaneously take two sets of notes for both of them!” Stephanie says.

Her uncle, Henry Tsang, completed his Bachelor’s degree in Architecture at UNSW and went on to become the first Asian-Australian Deputy Lord Mayor of the City of Sydney. He was later NSW Parliamentary Secretary for Trade and Investment.

UNSW and went on to become the first Asian-Australian Deputy Lord Mayor of the City of Sydney. He was later NSW Parliamentary Secretary for Trade and Investment. While she was at UNSW, Stephanie was one of the first students to receive a UNSW Finance Co-op Program scholarship. Once she began working in the finance industry as an intern, she quickly realised that women were very much in the minority.

“I saw a need for more mentoring and support, so I established Capital W, Australia’s first student-run organisation for undergraduate women in business. Capital W today has 2,000 members,” she says.

After graduation and four years at at UBS Investment Bank, Stephanie won the NSW Premier’s General Sir John Monash Scholarship in 2013. She is currently completing a Masters of Public Administration at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard and an MBA at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania.

This is my cousin Daryl (who won the uni medal for civil engineering in his year) and his wife and fellow UNSW alumna, Karen.
Many people have asked David Gonski (BCom ‘76, LLB ’77) to write his autobiography. He has consistently resisted, saying his life is “unworthy” of such a book and he believes doing such a book would be “arrogant in the extreme.”

Instead, an editor encouraged him to publish 11 of his most poignant speeches over the past five years. They reveal a lot about the man, his background, his career and philanthropy. I Gave a Gonski, Selected Speeches by David Gonski (Penguin 2015) was published in May.

Gonski became a household name in 2010, when the then federal Minister of Education, Julia Gillard, asked him to chair a national Review of Funding for Schooling. “I give a Gonski” became the rallying cry for people who supported his recommendation for more than $5 billion of extra funding for schools. Hence the title of the book.

Over the past four decades, Gonski has held various roles including corporate lawyer, advisor to many of the top 20 ASX-listed companies, and chair of not-for-profits such as the Art Gallery of NSW and the Sydney Theatre Company. He currently chairs Coca Cola Amatil Ltd and ANZ Bank, and is UNSW Chancellor.

Gonski critically and humbly assesses his career, and combines this with the gentle wisdom he brings to the boards on which he serves. The book seeks to nudge his adopted country towards a more progressive direction on corporate governance, doing business with Asia, encouraging innovation and philanthropy, and supporting education and gender equality.

He recounts his family’s heritage going back several generations in Europe and South Africa up to the 1961 Sharpeville Massacre. This was when his family immigrated to Sydney, and his first speech charts the ensuing years in the context of the political and social changes he’s witnessed.

In 1972, the young Gonski started a five-year combined law and commerce degree at UNSW, times he describes in the book as “the happiest days of my life. I loved the freedom and lack of discipline.”

In an interview with UNSWorld, Gonski adds: “I was very lucky to be at the university in the second year of the new law faculty. It was a very exciting period with some of our lectures held under trees and in breezy little huts near the Roundhouse. It was a wonderful feeling.”

The main highlight, he said, was listening to political commentators on the Library Lawn while eating sandwiches in the company of a young medical student, Orli Wargon, who later became an accomplished paediatric dermatologist and UNSW conjoint associate professor – as well as Gonski’s wife.

Gonski holds his wife and his mother in high esteem. These women play a pivotal role in his life, making him a vocal advocate for increased female representation on boards and gender equality in general, a theme threading through many of his speeches. “I’ve been very influenced by women,” he says.

Looking back on his career, Gonski says he enjoyed chairing the Gonski Review and felt privileged to visit more than 30 schools across the state. But his favourite job remains at UNSW, where he’s officiated at the graduations of 60,000 students.

“I have loved being Chancellor of UNSW for so many years (since 2005). It’s been a real prize and I’ve loved every aspect of it,” he says. More than a dozen members of the Gonski and Wargon families have attended the University.

Gonski has donated all the royalties of the book to UNSW outreach program ASPIRE, which offers regional and city kids from disadvantaged backgrounds the opportunity to get involved with UNSW, inspiring them to go to university.

ASPIRE works with 27 schools in Sydney and 30 in regional NSW, and holds activities including on-campus visits, university-student shadowing, tester days, work experience, a student convention and residential camps in Sydney.
These young people had great conversations with alumni, some were even offered employment, while more than 670 alumni pledged their financial support for scholarships for students from disadvantaged backgrounds to study at UNSW.

On an international front, we are working together with our existing alumni chapters and networks in Singapore, Hong Kong, Jakarta, Shanghai and Kuala Lumpur to introduce regular events in each city. These will include a Young Alumni Networking Drinks event with a young entrepreneurial speaker, an Alumni Host Program for returning international graduates, and a BrainFood lecture.

Are you living overseas? We invite alumni to work with us to grow our international alumni networks. Email me (s.zamagias@unsw.edu.au) and we will be happy to explore the possibility of supporting alumni activities in your city.

On a sporting front, we wish cricketer Alexandra (Alex) Blackwell, (BSc(Med) ’08) and the Australian Women’s Cricket squad all the very best in the Ashes series, which began on 21 July. We were delighted to meet Alex and present her with the 2014/15 Alumni Award in London recently.

All the best, Stegs

Make your mark on Alumni Park

JOIN more than 70 eminent alumni from Australia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and the United States and be one of 200 founding donors to ALUMNI PARK to be permanently represented on the feature wall.

The transformation of the UNSW Kensington campus is truly remarkable and one of the most exciting features will be ALUMNI PARK, providing an exciting new green space, which will be of benefit to future and current students, alumni and friends returning to visit their alma mater.

A gift of at least $10,000, paid over four instalments of $2,500 will see you join this great group of supporters. For further information, please contact Stergitsa on s.zamagias@unsw.edu.au

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Do you have a large UNSW alumni family?

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