

*SRC Elections:
Democracy's Last Laugh*

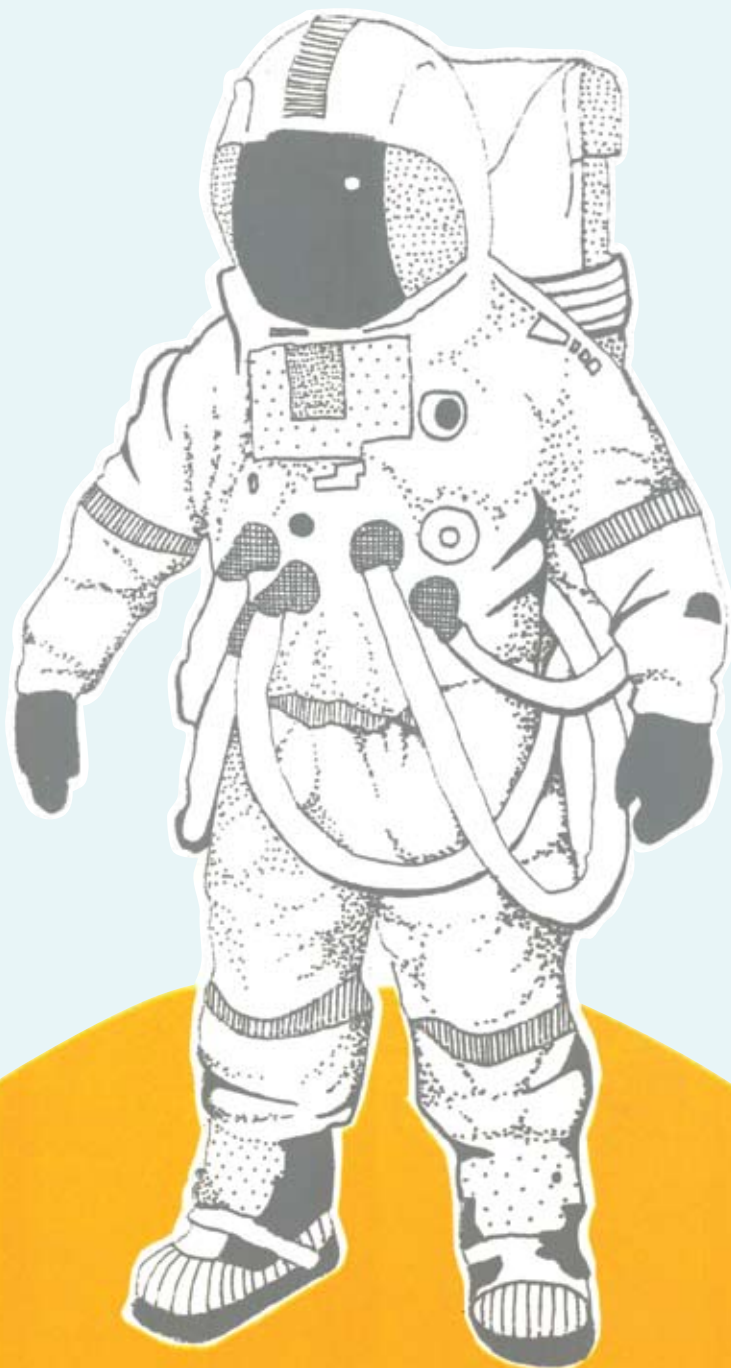
Ten Jobs a Fortnight

*Why Lawsoc
Sucks*

The Apocalypse

tharunka

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Editorial

So hey, this is the Genius issue of *Tharunka* and inside you'll find it filled with things written by me, Sean Lawson, as well as some other hacks.

Of course we've got all the regular acts of genius I normally contribute – for example, on pages 6 and 7 is my usual spread of outrageously brilliant satire, mixing biting observational humour, pure whimsy, and razor-sharp political acumen.

But this being the 'Genius' issue I thought I'd better repruhzent in an extra special way. So among my generous contributions, you can find my discussion of the Arc elections on page 18 and a lucid appreciation of fellow genius Andrew O'Keefe on page 26. Then on page 30 is a piece of masterful journalistic investigation about the dodginess of the Law Society, credited to Su-Min Lim but ghost-written by me. Just like all her articles are.

Finally, I've also documented my ongoing efforts to find gainful employment (and retain Centrelink payments) on page 21, thus proving that even geniuses have to struggle sometimes in order to succeed in life and showing that there's hope for all you lesser minds.

And then there's some other stuff by other people, I guess.

So enjoy!

-*Tharunka* editor-in-chief Sean Lawson,
with his sub-editors, Su-Min Lim and
Bart Cummings.



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Elizabeth Corkery vs Elliott Bryce Foulkes

tharunka

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Tharunka acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which the University now stands.

The Case for the Arts (Faculty)

Arguments defending the arts and humanities are fairly well worn these days. But in asking the question of how to nurture modern genius the arguments bear rehashing.

Generalising from the academic debate on this topic there are two schools of thought. One school argues that an education in the arts and humanities is critical to the development of well-rounded people and citizens. The other believes that the justification driven search for validation of the arts is what is wrong with the whole debate. That to attempt to find value based on an artificial standard of valuing is to cheapen the arts' intrinsic value.

In favour of the first school is the argument that by learning about and hopefully emulating the moral heroes celebrated in Greek mythology or Dickens novels the arts will generate value for society.

Supporting the second school's argument are those who consider reading, learning and imagining essentially a selfish act. That it is in the aesthetic value only that one finds pleasure in works of art or in books. As Stanley Fish, a *New York Times* columnist and professor put it, "they cannot be justified except in relation to the pleasure they give to those who enjoy them".

But even in such selfishness there is virtue. In the totality of such selfish acts is the critical ingredient for why the humanities enhance something more than just the consumer. It is through these acts that Stanley Fish finds the all important "respect for learning" that is at the core of not just well rounded people but a good community.

The end result, whichever way it is looked at, is that one way or another the moral imagination is expanded when respect for the humanities is prioritized. If this is the case then the natural question next is how to do better. How can universities do better and how can those that defend the arts do better.

As fashionable as it is to blame modern capitalism or the for-profit university system with uncaring administrators, often overlooked is how the student fits in the picture.

If consuming the arts is essentially selfish the result is that it is a lonely enterprise by default. But it does not need to be so.

Students themselves can and ought to do more to build collective wisdom and explore the frontiers of knowledge, not just follow a path. If students care more about the arts then something can be done through the power of their caring.

The risk of doing any less is to risk the arts becoming everything it stands against. The risk is that through the power of collective inertia it will appear to be something not worth celebrating, or enhancing or defending.

Those that care need to do better. The idea that moral imaginations exist and exist to be improved needs to be defended. The arts (faculty) is a good place to start. And, to very poorly paraphrase Albert Camus, if the arts (Faculty) will not help, who will?

THOMAS LIU

Meh!

HELLO THARUNKA

I happen to have been shocked by Su-Min Lim's article "Who Wants to Live Forever?" She falls back on the oldest hack trick of using spurious pop-culture references (in this case the nu-Doctor Who) as a hook to attempt to segue the unwitting audience into a rather mundane and unrelated discussion.

It is completely intellectually dishonest and lazy to begin a piece in such a way. It is almost as intellectually lazy as not checking page numbers for references in essays. Just because you know nobody will check if the quote comes from page 67 or 24 doesn't make it right. However I can understand why such apathy exists.

It exists because we would all prefer to take a moment away from our busy lives. We all want to be able to have a moment of rest. I think this should be encouraged. So I implore you to lie in the sun, take this *Tharunka*, drape it over your eyes and go to sleep.

ALEX FATTAL

Blame the voters, not Triple J

DEAR EDITORS,

I'd like to consider Anh's claim that Triple J is lacking diversity and not fully representing Australian youth in a different light. Triple J can only be considered together with the other ABC stations. I think Anh will find that a great deal of Jazz, Blues and Classical music is played on Classic FM, another ABC station, and that while Triple J is branded to be meeting the need for Australian youth, its real aim is to provide an outlet for music that would not otherwise reach a large audience.

Top 40 pop, rap and R&B is already dealt with on several commercial and community stations across the Sydney metropolitan area. Triple J provides an outlet for music that Nova, 2Day or Vega wouldn't play. Perhaps Anh could consider that hip-hop perhaps hasn't become as institutional in the Australian music scene as it has in the US, and so it hits the Top 40 more often than it would appear in the local scene.

Triple J may be narrow-minded in its programming policy, but that is to a) give a voice to music that is not at the forefront of commerciality and b) to provide outlet for Australian talent. Missy Higgins, to use an example, would not have made Nova if Triple J hadn't been there to provide her with some audience.

I agree it's a great shame the Hottest 100 of All Time wasn't more diverse - but it's all very subjective anyway, and I couldn't argue about those 100 tracks for the better part of a day. At the end of the day, perhaps we would be commenting more on the average voter than on station policy or programming.

Just a thought,
KYLAR LOUSSIKIAN

[Ed: we accidentally printed the wrong draft of Anh's article. The full version, which addresses these points, can be found at <http://tiny.cc/8pOf2j>]

Bench Press a Child Instead

DEAR SIR/MADAM,

On September 3, Mr Rudd announced \$132,000 funding for the AFL's "Just Think" advertising campaign to discourage youth violence.

He mentioned "people being decked on a regular basis, in brawls outside pubs" and questioned the wisdom of young people being in "a vanguard of social change".

The "change" referred to being "the working out of breakdowns in family relationships."

One "change" Mr Rudd didn't condemn was gyms now competing for the custom of working parents by offering evening childcare.

Parents having both spent all day at work out of contact with their children - can now spend their evenings doing exercises out of contact with their children.

Years later, when they can't find their children, will they wonder where their offspring learned to be so selfish as to not value family togetherness?

Yours Sincerely
DR ARNOLD JAGO

You can be poor and enjoy cocaine too

DEAR EDITORS,

I was disappointed by the anti-drug ad parody on the last page of issue 6. It suggests that police target "poor people drugs" and ignore cocaine, supposedly a "rich people drug". In fact, those drugs targeted in the government campaign are the most commonly used illicit drugs in Australia. (These are: marijuana, amphetamines, and ecstasy. Cocaine comes in fifth, after hallucinogens.) And some cocaine users are poor. They tend to inject the drug, and use it as often as possible.¹ Still, drug use is more common among poor people (for a variety of reasons). Is the parody suggesting that the government divert resources away from the most prevalent illicit drugs so it can arrest more rich people? When satirising society, it helps to know how society actually is.

As the parody notes, one can avoid arrest by consuming drugs discreetly. Thanks for the advice. I hope that one day recreational drugs can be used without unwanted government interference: this would benefit rich and poor alike.

Sincerely,
GABRIEL MCMANUS

¹. National Drug & Alcohol Research Centre, *Illicit Drug use in Australia: Epidemiology, use patterns and associated harm*, 2007. 2nd edition.

<http://www.nationaldrugstrategy.gov.au/internet/drugstrategy/Publishing.nsf/content/mono63>



UNSW Arts Faculty admits defeat and institutes "Bachelor of Hamburgers"

Having decided that things like history, politics, foreign languages and the social sciences are superfluous to today's business focused world, and deeply unprofitable, UNSW has announced an ambitious plan to retool its struggling Arts Faculty into something better suiting its vocational focus.

"Fuck it," said James Donald, Dean of the Faculty, "We're not teaching them anything worthwhile anyway. Most of them won't even become lawyers or business people. Let's just teach the bastards how to make burgers and be done with it." He added that you don't even have to study numbers or money during an Arts degree.

The new scheme will save the Faculty lots of money, as tired old academics get sacked and replaced by fun new part time "Burger-neers." These experienced fast food technicians will teach subjects like Advanced Burgerology, The History of Fries, and The Pickle: Perspectives and Debate in Morven Brown classrooms especially refitted as industrial kitchens.

In other news, the Australian School of Business finished the installation of gold-plated toilet seats in the Executive Spa.

KEITH WINDSCHUTTLE EXECUTED AS LEFTIST FORCES WIN HISTORY WARS

After years of protracted conflict, Australia's History Wars were ended yesterday with a final crushing victory by leftist forces over the last bastion of conservative opposition. At around 3pm yesterday afternoon, the Manning Clarke Battalion the offices of Quadrant magazine, broadcasting calls for surrender before storming the building.

Keith Windschuttle, leader of the holdout conservatives, was captured and shot on site for crimes against humanity – a charge he has always denied citing lack of evidence.

The victory has finally and conclusively solved many divisive questions in the field of Australian historiography. The bloody triumph of revisionism has shown up the fatal weaknesses in the conservative position, proving the existence of the Stolen Generation and Tasmanian Genocide.

This debacle was merely the latest in a string of losses for the beleaguered traditionalists. Robert Manne's high-profile defection to the political-correctness camp, and John Howard's capitulation in Bennelong in 2007 seemed to signal that the end of this grinding, decades-long culture war was in sight. Demoralised hard-liners continued to hold out in scattered bastions, issuing belligerent video statements from their caves and think tanks, but the writing was on the wall even before the final offensive commenced.

The whereabouts of many other prominent culture warriors from the defeated camp is still unknown. Andrew Bolt is believed to have been killed in the reconquest of the ABC building. His body has not yet been recovered. Miranda Devine's insurgent campaign of terror continues unabated in the leftist heartland of inner Sydney. David Flint has reportedly fled the country. He was last seen taking refuge in staunchly monarchist Thailand, where sources say he feels welcome and comfortable like never before.

Jubilant leftists, wearing their trademark black armbands, paraded through the streets of Canberra popping bottles of chardonnay as their leaders saluted their efforts. "I'm just glad it's over," one historian said as he happily sipped a victory latte. "Now it's time to bring them home." After such a bloody and devastating conflict, celebrations are expected to be subdued. The official mouthpiece of the leftist junta, *The Monthly*, has announced nationwide victory rallies tomorrow, with screenings of Rabbitproof Fence to mark the occasion.

The victors have big plans for their revolution, now that all opposition has been crushed. A new flag and a republic have already been implemented, talkback radio is now banned under penalty of death, and Reconciliation Camps are being expanded to house, re-educate, and rehabilitate the new POWs.

SMALL OIL SUFFERING DURING RECESSION

Iran declares war ... ON OVERPRICED RUGS!

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad yesterday issued an aggressive televised speech to his nation and the wider world, declaring that the Islamic Republic would no longer tolerate excessively high prices on rugs and carpets.

The rant lasted for about 30 seconds and was adorned with colourful graphics declaring "UNBELIEVABLE BARGAINS" and "EVERYTHING MUST GO" against a backdrop of Iranian flags and shots of stocked warehouses. The President grew increasingly loud and bellicose throughout

the declaration, saying that prices must be destroyed like Israel itself. In a major policy shift he declared that the country, the world's leading purveyor of Persian rugs, would henceforth be selling stock at "unbelievably discounted prices" in order to take control of the rug market and crush the infidels and rival rug-producers.

The controversial demagogue then took aim at critics of his nation's rug sales policies, denying that he was crazy for setting prices so low. "People ask how can these prices be so low, these cannot be genuine... may

God strike them down!" he declared. "We are Persians, we make and sell genuine Persian rugs! We sell to you retail at wholesale prices!"

Concluding the address, Ahmadinejad extended a hand of friendship to the Western World, urging them to forget past differences over Israel and nuclear energy programs and to "Come on in and grab an unbelievable bargain!" He added, finally, that they must hurry because stocks will not last long at these prices.

JOHN HOWARD SECRETLY RELISHING LIBERAL PARTY IMPLOSION

Something Kyle Sandilands said this morning bumps African disaster from news bulletin

A major natural disaster shook a poverty-stricken African country yesterday, leading to scores of deaths and lots of heartstring-tugging footage of distraught children and desperate mothers. However, Australians will never know the details because a series of editors and journalists at major television stations have decided that this is less important and interesting than a comment made by Kyle Sandilands.

Some observers attribute the baffling series of decisions in different editorial rooms around the country to Australia's self-absorbed callousness towards the plight of people across the world. They argued that people don't care because the Africans would have just starved to death anyway so who cares and it's not like they even speak English or play cricket (probably).

Others, however, see the perverse allocation of finite TV time to a local knob head as a consequence of the media's obsession with itself. One commentator remarked that "Journalists are pack of vicious narcissists and perverts, who love nothing more than tearing down the people they know in order to feed their vampiric desire for self-validation."

He went on to explain that "The media is a small industry and people all know each other. The gleeful reporting of Sandilands' latest piece of uneducated fuckery is personal, you can see it. The fuckers taste blood. Compared to that, a thousand dead black kids just doesn't matter."

Tonight's broadcasts are expected to feature details of the well-known douchbag and radio personality's preening and self-pitying attempts to defend himself, at the expense of a major international political dispute or a terrorist bombing.

FAT KID ON CHILDREN'S FOOTBALL TEAM NO LONGER USEFUL

Two years ago, 13 year old Tyler Thurstons was an integral part of his local youth football team. As a significantly overweight pre-teen, he found himself at an enormous advantage against the much smaller players from other teams. His size allowed him to simply steamroll other players and frequently score. Team-mates were very supportive, saying "I'm glad he's on our team, he scores a lot" and "it's funny when he squashes the other team."

All that has now changed, however, and longtime teammates increasingly find Tyler a liability rather than an asset. As many boys have hit puberty and begun to rapidly develop, Thurstons' natural advantages have disappeared. His size now means that cannot run fast enough, whilst most of the other kids can now tackle him successfully.

"This is a common phenomena among little fatty boom-bahs," says child sports expert Loretta Yang. "During the early years of children's sport, fat kids are an integral part of any team's success. Coaches can simply place them near the goals or try-line where they can crash through their tiny, prepubescent little opponents. The normal sized kids are often scared of getting simply crushed by the fatty boom-bahs—a fat pre-teen player is in fact a psychological weapon as well as a physical one."

However, these glory years do not typically last. "What we see with fat kids like Thurstons is that they peak early. He is reaching the end of his golden days. As players develop physically and improve their skills, the fatties get left behind. They frequently drop out of sport all together, often becoming depressed and bitter, recalling better days when other people actually found them useful. There's nothing sadder than a 15 year old who has already passed their prime."

Black actor sick of being cast in chocolate commercials

Black actor James Dalton, 26, is a talented performer with aspirations for the big time. Since graduating from NIDA in 2005, Dalton has been working intermittently in theatre and community television while seeking higher profile roles in drama and scripted comedy. Lately, however, Dalton has found that his most consistent source of work comes from chocolate advertisements. "Sometimes I ride a skateboard through a colourful world of chocolate, where the streets and houses are made of Dairy Milk, just like my delicious chocolatey skin," explained Dalton. "Other times I, through my blackness, represent the groove and attitude which one can only obtain through the consumption of chocolate."

Although Dalton was initially delighted with the steady stream of revenue, he is beginning to fear becoming typecast as new roles fail to eventuate. Luckily, there are signs that the racial diversity of the television industry is increasing. Says Dalton: "I heard a rumour that the people who do the ads for Frangelico are looking for a male mascot. I wonder if my smooth black skin could be used to represent the sensuous, creamy texture of this hazelnut liqueur? It'll be a challenge...but I'm always looking for ways to extend my performing range."

OUTRAGEOUS
MEDIAWATCH EXPOSE
BLUNTED BY OWN SMUGNESS

MUSHROOM,
MUSHROOM



BART CUMMINGS

My phone is ringing and I see the name in the caller bar. It is Chris, one of my Dad's friends. It's weird that he's calling me. I answer.

"Hello?"

"Did you hear about the kelpie at the Wagga Wagga sheepdog trial?"

"...no."

"...He was found guilty." Chris wheeze-laughes then says 'see you later' and hangs up.

This is a story about my experiment in stand-up comedy, an adventure that has inspired all manner of people to send me their jokes without any prelude or explanation. I still use Chris' kelpie joke, but I don't think it's as good as the one that was voted the funniest at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival this year: "Hedgehogs. Why can't they just share the hedge?"

About a year ago I had been eating some jelly dinosaurs in the company of Steve, a friend. He asked me,

"What are three things you would like to do in your life?"

"Hm," I said, "I've always wanted to host a rice pudding party."

"Yes."

"And march into the city with six other friends wearing suits and carrying briefcases singing in unison 'Heigh ho, heigh ho, it's off to work we go.'"

"Yes."

"And do some stand-up comedy."

Steve hesitated for a moment then showed excitement for the third one too. I wondered whether his hesitation came from the same place as my own misgivings about stand-up. Does a funny thing need an audience of strangers to prove its funniness? I had spent up to an hour of my life watching an endless loop of Weebles' 'www.badgerbadgerbadger.com', a website revealed to me by Steve who, like me, can be amused by something without a punch line or any other rational purpose in sight. 'badgerbadgerbadger' is funny because it is about badgers, it just keeps going, and a ridiculous amount of time and effort has obviously been invested in it by the creators with nothing in mind except the badgeriness of badgers.

Steve asked me why I hadn't done stand-up yet, but I explained it in other terms. That it had always seemed like the kind of hackneyed, risky, difficult thing that I would only ever watch other people spectacularly fail at doing. Then I noticed that I was in my fourth year of a law degree and had barely done a single thing I cared about. Popping a jelly brontosaurus into my mouth, I began to form a jelly-like but tentatively firming conviction to do this thing. I would certainly humiliate myself, but it would be one of those peaks of horror that a life needs every now and then. Later I thought about it some more, then googled Sydney's open mic spots and set up a gig at an inner city hotel.

Browsing in Dymock's city book shop while I was meant to be filing court documents in my tedious former job as a paralegal, I happened upon the "public speaking" section and noticed the name of Carl Barron on the blurb of one thin volume. Carl Barron is very funny. He was one of the few comics on the NRL Footy Show to generate real rather than encouraging laughter. Have you ever made that heavy exhaling noise through the nostrils when someone expected to you laugh at what they had said but it wasn't funny? You'll be washing your car, and your neighbour walks past and says "Washing the car, eh?" and waits for you to laugh. So you exhale at him through your nose, without really laughing or even smiling, and everyone goes on as if the social contract had been satisfied. This is only one of Carl Barron's great jokes.

I leafed through the book and found his chapter. His message was that comedy only works if you talk about what you really believe. They have to be your own real opinions. I stood in the book store and felt relief wash over me – there would be no need to conjure up some "hilarious" on-stage persona. I could just say stuff that I believed to be true.

I told my family about the stand-up gig. It was meant as a bit of an up-yours, since I'd quit my law degree and knew that they disapproved. The sickening shame of also attempting stand-up comedy would be the exclamation mark on my passive aggression. I waited for a pause in the family dinner and piped up. "I'm doing some stand-up comedy now." Mum's eyes lit up.

"Stand-up comedy? Oh ho ho. You'll be great! You know what you should do, you should be like *Curb Your Enthusiasm*! They're so funny!" They were very excited. They were definitely going to come and watch. Then I gave them a sample of my material.

"Yeah, so listen to this one... I don't understand why walking along the street footpath always leads to an angry face off.



You walk towards a narrow section with an obstacle and the person coming in the other direction wants to have right of way, no matter what. Who's thinking of right of way when they're walking? Who's conscious of that? I'll walk along, minding my own business, when some guy passes me and has to duck beneath some large branches protruding over someone's fence. He gets pissed off and turns around theatrically: "Hey, what do you want me to do, walk into the tree?"

Me: "I have no opinion about you or the tree."
I waited for a reaction, but there was only the scrape of cutlery on dinner plates. My grandfather peered at me. "Where's the joke?" he said.
"It's not going to be really awkward for us, is it?" said Mum.

We are at the venue, and I am having internal organ spasms. Friends and family have taken their seats and are watching the live drama unfold. John, the MC, works the crowd by picking on individuals. He singles out one guy with a silvery head of hair, beard and glasses: "And Francis Ford Coppola is with us tonight. Thanks for taking time out of your busy schedule." People gasp at the shock of this small cruelty, but are mesmerised. He calls on the man's opinion all night, calling him "Francis", but the man keeps a dignified silence. John tells a joke about an Indian guy and somebody coughs. Buses move past on the street outside. "Do you hear that sound," he says, pointing out the window, a steely look on his face, "The sound of change tinkling in the bus? That's a bad sound in comedy."

John looks down at his sheet and relaxes. He's got a line ready.

"The next guy is a good guy, someone you'd like to have a nice chat to, to have a beer with. Yeah. And tonight is his first time." Sympathetic pause, and I start to get up. "Let's hope he doesn't panic and strangle us. It's Bart Cummings!"

This punch line is already better than anything I have to offer, but I go on stage anyway. I take the microphone and a wave of dread washes over me in direct proportion to the supportive applause from my loyal friends and family and curious bystanders. What a huge let down this could be. Somebody calls out my high school nickname and I quail. I have no control over this situation anymore. The first joke skitters into my mind.

"Uh, I'd like to say something about, uh, about potato scallops." Quiet has descended. Was that a snort of derision? "It's hard to order a potato scallop and nothing else." Several people smile and nod thoughtfully. "You go into a fish and chip shop and order your scallop, and the fish and chip guy is thinking 'I'm gonna have to get off my chair, put this scallop in the oil, and spend a few minutes wrapping it in paper to make about 50 cents here. There better be something else this guy wants too.' So I make my order. "'Uh, can I please have a potato scallop.' The guy scribbles down the order then looks back at me, expectantly. 'Plus, uh...six....potato scallops.'"

A short pause as people's brains consider the possibility that there is something intelligent or meaningful about this joke and quickly realise there isn't. Then the unexpected: enormous laughter. Success! My God! Laughter here there and everywhere! Potato scallops have saved me! I'll have ALL your potato scallops!

And dear reader, I don't care if you don't like this joke. I have tested it, and it is objectively funny – I had a Facebook conversation with the most deadpan man in the world, Alex of Chur, Switzerland, who has never in his life laughed at something he didn't find funny. I told him all my jokes except the scallop one and got nothing. Then I told the scallop one. And I got a LOL. QED the joke is funny.

If you have any good jokes, send them to me at tharunka09@gmail.com. I may use them at parties.

ANDREW HANSEN WAS RIGHT

RAFAEL DEL ROSARIO thinks a dead asshole is still an asshole.

On July 29 to the rejoicing of politicians and current affairs shows and the mourning of thousands of students, the lights went off on *The Chaser's War on Everything*. While the show became tiresome towards its end, it still provided an occasional laugh as we were entertained by scripted stunts and edited footage of American stupidity.

During the final montage, watching footage of the infamous APEC incident, a particular Chaser skit came to mind, a favourite of mine that caused quite a ruckus at the time – the Eulogy Song.

It's odd that generally "anti-PC" people who have no problem dishing out stereotypical and ignorant pleasantries towards minorities will complain about comments directed towards deceased people they liked. The outrage the song caused merely proved what Andrew Hansen was satirising.

Let's be honest, Stan Zemanek was a xenophobic cock ("whose views were more malignant than his brain"). People attacked Zemanek's many personality flaws when he was alive, yet we tend to forget them now that he has passed away. Lampooning the bad side of a recently dead person's character is apparently just as bad as calling someone a terrorist for wearing a burqa.

The Eulogy Song is exceptionally relevant in light of Michael Jackson's death. Boris Johnson, mayor of London and Conservative Party member, which generally represents those anti-PC views aforementioned, stated in a UK Daily Telegraph article that it would be "wrong to sneer at this outpouring of public grief". On the tragic day of Jackson's death, as I listened to an old *Thriller* record which I got for fifty cents at my high school fete, I could understand why millions of people around the world wept over the loss of the King of Pop.

In the following few days and weeks however, I couldn't comprehend the fuss that was being made. Johnson went on to claim that Jackson was a martyr and compared his death to that of Princess Diana. For more than a decade prior to his death, the world portrayed Jackson as crazy or worse. Now all of a sudden he is a martyr. That's a big call, classifying him alongside Joan of Arc. I was under the impression that a martyr was someone who willingly dies for a particular cause. Unless getting high on painkillers is a cause worth dying for, I can't see how Jackson was a martyr and he definitely was no saint.

Neither was Princess Diana a saint as the Eulogy Song and Matt Kwan (Issue 3) pointed out. Death by speeding away from paparazzi is hardly martyrdom. Although Princess Di's perceived purity and innocence is dubious, what she did do was enhance the Disney princess myth that princesses should be kind, compassionate and charitable, inspiring young girls to pursue similar noble heights. Diana's public image also raised public expectations of otherwise pointless royal families, challenging them to use their position of prominence for the greater good.

Jackson's impact on humanity is slight compared to Diana's. While Jackson opened up doors for African Americans in the music industry, particularly in breaking down racial barriers on MTV, people forget that Jackson hated being black so much, he became white. Jackson also did a lot of charity too, but the motive behind celebrity charity is often questionable due to certain tax benefits and publicity brownie points. On the extreme side, some believe Jackson's death was a fabricated publicity stunt to save his legacy from an embarrassing concert tour which would have exposed his fragility.

Since his death, throughout all the praise, the media downplayed the fact that he was a suspected paedophile. Whether or not the rumours are true, in general he was just plain weird. Reverend Al Sharpton told Jackson's "kids" (isn't dark skin the dominant gene?) that "there was nothing strange about your daddy" but they didn't call him Wacko Jacko for nothing. The negative aspects of his life shouldn't be forgotten just because he is dead, particularly since most of these were self made.

So I disagree with Boris Johnson, I can sneer at Michael Jackson, but not out of spite. I like his music. He was a musical genius and his dancing epitomised awesomeness but let's be honest, he wasn't going to produce another number one hit any time soon.

There is no doubt that he went out with a bang fitting for a King of Pop with everyone talking about him again but in the end, dead people aren't all martyrs or saints.

Michael Jackson could have stopped being weird and Stan Zemanek could have stopped being whatever you want to call him.



FUNNIEST CAPTION

"Send a witty caption to tharunka09@gmail.com. The best entrant will win a Mystery Prize.*

* So mysterious even we don't know what it is."

THE TROUBLE WITH LAWSOC

SU-MIN LIM

Greasy, evasive and obsessed with obscuring information. These are the familiar stereotypes of the lawyer. I studied law at UNSW for three years and am thankful to say that for most students, these descriptors are entirely false.

Most of the people I shared classes with were fun, likeable and conscientious and it's a pleasure to know them still.

The same cannot be said of the UNSW Law Society ('Lawsoc'). For some reason, this organisation seems to be deeply committed to avoiding scrutiny of what they do with their considerable sums of money. Thankfully, they're just not very good at it.

I started looking into Lawsoc with some fairly basic questions. How much is in the budget, how is it spent, and can members get access to this information? In late August, however, I was rung by a member of this year's Lawsoc executive who explained the answers to these questions were that he couldn't tell me, he didn't know and no.

'We don't release the budget to members, or to the public, no. Only to the executive.'

'IT IS, AFTER ALL, NICE TO HAVE THOUSAND DOLLAR BAR TABS.'

Why not?

'It comes down to the bargaining chip. At the end of the day, all university law societies will look for sponsorship. If, say, the University of Wollongong could say to the firms, this is how much UNSW gets, these law firms could just apply a uniform amount. That could end up affecting us negatively and other universities positively.'

Why does he think UNSW gets more sponsorship than other societies?

'I can only guess that we, and some universities like Sydney University, would get more than other universities... I can only guess that it would apply to the reputation of the law school, and the quality of the graduates.'

None of this sounds particularly convincing to me, and here's why.

Let's start with the assertion that keeping secret figures is necessary to preserve negotiating power with firms. Even if this were true, it wouldn't be a reason to obscure the entire budget. Lawsoc could still publish totals – say, for example, a pie chart representing sums and/or percentages spent on different portfolios. This could be done without revealing the contribution of any specific firm, and would be valuable for members seeking insight on how the society is run.

As far as I could tell, however, the Lawsoc executive have no such plans. "We don't do pie charts, no. I can't tell you about the exact allocation."

Not that the thing about the bargaining chip made much sense to begin with. Lawsoc tells us that a) UNSW graduates are better than other graduates and b) this motivates firms to give us more money. If this is the case, then firms will continue to give us more money regardless of how other uni societies feel about it. Corporations are very good at pursuing their own interest. If they think it's worth paying extra to secure UNSW graduates as future employees, they will do so. With all due respect to uni societies, the protestations of a bunch of students are always going to sound pretty feeble against a top tier firm pursuing its bottom line.

Within half an hour of the phone call with the Lawsoc Executive member, an email landed in my inbox. It was from the Co-President of the Law Society, Shikha Sethi. I'd contacted her two days before seeking information about the Society's budget and disclosure practices. Shikha wrote: "Thank you very much for your email. *Tharunka* is always a great read and it's a great paper to be writing for."

Kind of her.

"I understand that you have been in contact with ____, earlier today. If you decide to pursue your feature article on the Law Society, I would be much obliged if you wouldn't mind forwarding me a copy of your article before it goes to print. The primary reason I ask is that ____ mentioned that you raised a few questions with him about areas beyond the ____ portfolio that he wasn't entirely sure about in responding to, such as issues of transparency. If possible, I'd like to make sure you have the most accurate and comprehensive information."



Accurate and comprehensive sounded good to me. I emailed Shikha back reiterating my previous questions – namely, what the budget was, how it was allocated and whether this information was available to members. Seemingly forgetting her previous reservations about an Exec member commenting beyond his portfolio, Shikha responded with the following:

'From my understanding, ____ has already addressed those questions, particularly the reason why we are unable to disclose budgeting figures. However, I can assure you that, as a Cabinet, we are committed to institutionalising transparency practices that will improve our accountability to our members.'

A commitment which apparently doesn't extend to describing any concrete measures. Really, it's hard to tell which part of this response is more disappointing – the lack of any actual proposals for transparency, or the fact that the email itself is so damn unconvincing. If lawyers are supposed to be the Machiavellian masters of spin, these guys aren't shaping up to be very successful lawyers.

'IF LAWYERS ARE SUPPOSED TO BE THE MACHIAVELLIAN MASTERS OF SPIN, THESE GUYS AREN'T SHAPING UP TO BE VERY SUCCESSFUL LAWYERS.'

Maybe this evasiveness would be excusable, in a benevolent dictator sort of way, if it were clear that Lawsoc is being run in a professional and efficient fashion. I contacted a former officer of the society and asked her roughly how she thought the money was being allocated. Her response:

'From corporate sponsorship Lawsoc gets about \$10 000 a year that they put on bar tabs. They rented out the Ivy [Ballroom] on Saturday night and had oysters and prawns on little platters and free drinks walking round with fancy waiters between 7.30 - 2 am...'

Clearly when it comes to socials, Lawsoc aren't holding back. Like any good journalist, I Googled the Ivy and came up with the following:

'Step inside the awe-inspiring 509 sqm space and you'll see just what makes this venue a totally unique concept...Six massive white chandeliers, each a stunning 2.25 metres in diameter, hang from the white glossy panelled timber ceiling.'

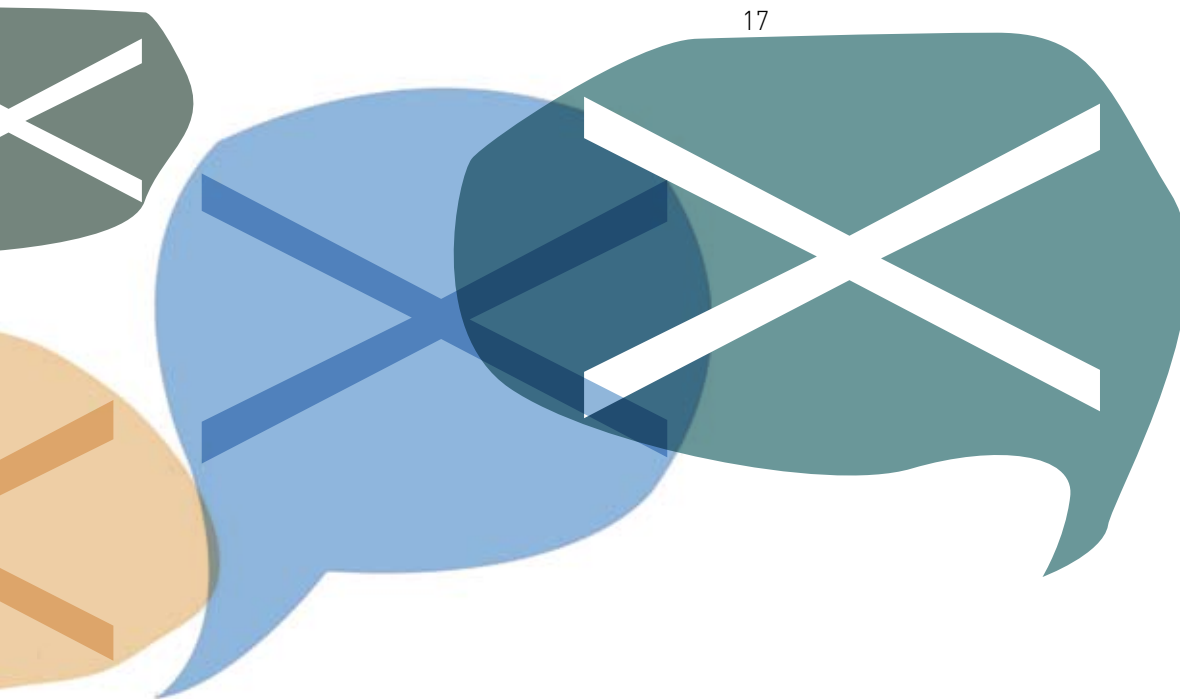
Perhaps a majority of law students would consider two metre chandeliers a necessity for a good night out. Or perhaps they, like me, would wonder what the fuck kind of architect can't think of a better way to represent luxury than a giant chandelier. Either way, they're surely entitled to decide for themselves whether the money that is raised in their name is being well used.

Apparently the quality of governance at Lawsoc has improved in recent years. Again from the former officer: "The year I first got involved, it was ridiculous. Hundreds of dollars just went missing, cheques just disappeared. This year, they're really happy with the current treasurer because that hasn't been happening." If true, it speaks volumes about Lawsoc's general standards that money not vanishing into thin air is considered cause for celebration.

Let's be clear I'm not accusing Lawsoc of corruption. Neither I nor anyone else has done an audit of the organisation. But the fact that these rumours exist, and are taken seriously by Lawsoc members, is a huge problem in itself. Because given that no-one gets to see the budget besides the executive, the rumours are plausible. The point of transparency is to instil confidence. It's not enough for an organisation with thousands of dollars flowing through its budget to promise to be honest. Lawsoc needs to put mechanisms in place that render dishonesty impossible.

I'm still not entirely sure how UNSW Lawsoc came to be so poorly managed. At first I thought Lawsoc's flaws might arise from the essential triviality of student organisations. The entire Cabinet could be vaporised tomorrow, and a lot of students probably wouldn't notice apart from an eerie silence during Revue season. Sure, the Society provides some valuable services that can truly enrich the experience of participants, such as organising competitions. Still, there aren't going to be angry voters picketing the office if they screw things up. It's easy to get away with doing a job badly when it didn't matter that much in the first place.

This theory took a blow, however, when I started looking into how other societies operate. Attending the Annual General Meeting of the UNSW Business Society (Bsoc), I was struck by just how open the process was. The Treasurer presented a detailed report including the percentages spent on each portfolio. When I asked if members could get access to the budget, she explained that it would be released online at the end of the year, after all receipts had been collected and reimbursements made. Bear in mind that Bsoc is primarily run by and for Commerce students. Their entire training and profession, as I would know only too well, is geared towards becoming a money grubbing freak. The law, on the other hand, is supposed to be about doing justice. And yet it's easy to see which organisation is run in a more ethical fashion.



I also contacted the 2008 Treasurer of the UTS Law Society, Wai Kaey Soon, who described an institutional culture very different from UNSW. "During my term, I released a budget to the entire council every quarter. It was free for every councillor to obtain and if a student had asked I would have given that quarter's, no questions asked. I also provided a final budget for the AGM held every year. It had a proper disclosure of all our payments in and out. Everybody was free to attend...We used to have it on our website, and we emailed a link to all of our members after the AGM each year." Despite the allegedly inferior quality of its graduates, UTS Lawsoc at least manages to keep its members informed.

The paradox is that UNSW Lawsoc is not run by incompetents. I mentioned at the start of the article that during my years as a law student, I had the pleasure of sharing classes with talented and conscientious people. Several of these people now hold senior positions in the Lawsoc 'Cabinet', and I contacted them in the process of writing this article. So why are these good people running a bad organisation?

My explanation is something to do with the quasi-corporate structure of Lawsoc, and the gap this opens up between Cabinet members and their individual responsibility for their actions. My first contact repeatedly emphasised how everything Lawsoc does is motivated 'by the interests of our members'. Intense focus on one, ostensibly altruistic goal - getting the best deal for UNSW law students - can blind an otherwise thoughtful person to the other ethical issues at play. I was reminded, incongruously, of Wendell Potter, the former American health insurance executive who recently testified before the Senate about strategies he used to use to cancel sick peoples' policies. Potter told the New York Times that he and his colleagues weren't evil, just obsessed with maximising value for shareholders.

While Lawsoc thankfully doesn't have the ability to inflict anywhere near that scale of damage, there is a common thread at work here. That, plus a generous dose of self interest - it is, after all, nice to have thousand dollar bar tabs - blinds decent people to the fact that hiding information in order to preserve your privilege is not exactly ethical behaviour.

What this suggests, however, is that things can change. Lawsoc may not at present have the will to run in a transparent and accountable fashion, but it does have the capacity. If you're a law student, a law school escapee or someone who uses the computers in the Law Library, email Lawsoc now and ask why you can't see the money that is raised in your name.

The address is presidents@unswlawsoc.org and you can also find contact details online. Perhaps that will be the motivation Lawsoc need to stop behaving like lawyer stereotypes, and start acting like actual lawyers.



UNSW

STUDENT POLITICS

EXPLAINED

SEAN LAWSON WAS ELECTED AS THARUNKA EDITOR
IN A HILARIOUSLY APATHETIC ELECTION LAST YEAR.

"THE KEY SWING VOTER GROUP, PEOPLE WHO DON'T GIVE A SHIT, ARE HARD TO SWAY WHEN YOU'RE SO PASSIONATE AND SHOUTY."

By the time you read this, the Student Representative Council elections at UNSW will have come and gone, maybe making a few people wonder what the fuck was going on. I'm going to attempt to explain the UNSW SRC and describe the contours of student electoral politics at our uni to the vast majority of you who neither know much nor give a shit about it. Statistics say that about 2% of you will have voted – 1000 would be a good turnout. I'd wager the voter base and *Tharunka* readership overlap somewhat, but even then, most students clearly won't know much about those mobs in red, blue and purple shirts trying to bully them into voting booths in Week 9.

WHAT THE SRC DOES

UNSW's Student Representative Council was formerly part of the Student Guild, and is now part of Arc, functioning as an odd sort of "democracy department" within the Arc corporate structure. In theory it's supposed to be how Arc is kept accountable and engaged with students. Elections to the SRC thus theoretically ensure that the student will be expressed within Arc in a democratic fashion. The "SRC = democratic student representation" thing is the party line that Arc and the SRC itself run, and what *Blitz* will provide if it runs an article explaining the election. Structurally, on paper, it's true, but I want to focus on who's actually in the elections and how they work at the level of politics.

Given the lack of voter turnout, one could decry the apathy of the current generation and bemoan the death of student radicalism, if one were so inclined. I don't think it's a huge loss because the issues the SRC deals with simply aren't that vital. They generally campaign on practical 'Student Issues' like Youth Allowance payments, the lack of concession cards for international students, and the like. I'm glad someone cares enough to write letters and make phone-calls to politicians and organise rallies, but this is hardly world-shattering stuff here and the majority can be forgiven for not caring enough to vote.

THE ESTABLISHMENT CANDIDATES

It's axiomatic that student politics is a strange, petty, and insular little world. It was even in its longhair 1960s and 1970s heyday – bitter, personality driven, totally non-representative. At UNSW you can't even really call what we have "politics", in the sense of "different groups of people with competing ideologies organised into parties trying to win well-contested elections."

The SRC has essentially been a one-party state for about 4 years, under a ticket with the name 'Voice' which keeps getting re-elected in landslides and will likely have been re-elected again at the time of printing. They were wearing the red shirts, if you saw them. I'm not sure what they've accomplished this year, but there sure were a lot of BBQs.

Theoretically, Voice is a Labor Left group and the same name exists at other universities. However, these days, in practice most of them aren't party-affiliated. So it's almost a no-party state. They're a self-perpetuating extended friendship group of largely well-meaning activist types. The UNSW SRC is presently composed of people who have given enough of a shit to run for the positions, and frequently they have had no opposition. For next year, Voice grabbed something like half the "officer" positions unopposed.

Getting on the ballot with Voice in any given year is a matter of knowing someone who's already there. That's how your current *Tharunka* editorial team scored the gig. This friendship-based selection process also has the neat side-effect of creating massive psychodramas around the Blockhouse around nomination time, as frantic current Voice members and their would-be successors manoeuvre for ticket positions – SRC President being the sought-after position. Preselections are taken very seriously and non-nominations can end friendships and create rival political tickets.

UNSW student elections aren't democratic, but I'm not sure what you'd call them instead. Effort-crat? What I mean is that with such low awareness and low turnout, the winners are whoever has a larger physical presence at voting booths and thus convinces more people to enter the booths on the election days. More campaigners in coloured shirts means more chances to get people into voting booths.

Voice's entrenchment in the SRC is thus self-perpetuating. Since they have been there for several years they know how to win elections. They especially know how to effectively and successfully approach total strangers and make their bullshit sound reasonable, something which tickets made of fringe political groups or inexperienced outsiders don't quite get. Anyone who cares enough to know that the SRC exists, to know that elections are happening, and to put their hand up for a position (eg, Ethnocultural Affairs or Womens Officer), is going to run with Voice since they're likely to already have friends among that ticket. Unless they're a member of Socialist Alternative, but we'll get to that in a moment.

THE OTHER GUYS

There's also something called NUS – the National Union of Students. This is big league stuff. Elections for this happen at the same time, with NUS delegates are elected to go to the annual meeting of the peak Student Union body in Ballarat. They have well-established, bitterly divided factions. In Ballarat they get drunk, try to win positions in the NUS national committee thingy, and they pay out the Young Libs who in turn generally act like fascists (singing the National Anthem at an indigenous speaker about three years ago, for example).

The NUS race is where the opposition most rates in for a mention. First are Socialist Alternative, with the ticket name 'Left Focus', probably wearing purple. Running on a platform of an "independent left wing SRC", they couldn't be accused of apathy. They're the people who keep putting up those posters around campus about meetings in Newtown with headings like "Was Marx right all this time?" Shoutingly, ravingly socialist to the extent that a lot of socialists think they're nuts, their tactics and behaviour tend to undermine their ability to grab votes. The key swing voter group, people who don't give a shit, are hard to sway when you're so passionate and shouty. Last year they got about 23% of the vote.

Then the Liberals (and a couple of Labor Right people) are 'Spark' this year. Last year they didn't get a ticket together, this year it was thrown together at the last minute before nomination deadlines. Judging by the list of their candidates and the long list of SRC positions they aren't running for, they're far more interested in grabbing those National Union of Students spots than actually being SRC members.

Because of all the unopposed positions, even if Left Focus and Spark got everything they ran for, I think Voice might still have a voting majority at meetings. I assume these two opposition tickets are more focused on the national

stage than the SRC because ineffective reformist advocacy is all the SRC is structurally able to do, and all the people committed to that run with Voice. By contrast, Liberals mostly think student issues are a bit stupid and lefty, whilst the Socialist Alternative people may be more interested in crushing Israel or funding the revolution in Venezuela than making a submission to a Senate Inquiry on Youth Allowance rates. So there's a bit of self-selection, you've pretty much gotta be a certain type of nice-but-ineffective, reformist, soft-leftist sort to even WANT to be an SRC person.

"UNSW STUDENT ELECTIONS AREN'T DEMOCRATIC, BUT I'M NOT SURE WHAT YOU'D CALL THEM INSTEAD."

Really though, all this doesn't and shouldn't matter to most of us. It's nice that the SRC provides a figurehead to provide media quotes and someone Arc can consult, and I guess that it's better that this figurehead be someone sane and committed. However, given that all that the SRC does is run a few random political campaigns and a few events on campus, the elections simply aren't the most vital things in the world.

Except the selection of *Tharunka* editors of course, that shit is life and death.



10

JOBS A FORTNIGHT

SEAN LAWSON has been applying for jobs in order to keep receiving Centrelink money. Many of the jobs he is either uninterested in, or unqualified for, but resumés and cover letters had to be sent anyway.

TELEMARKETER: Located near public transport, we are seeking a self motivated outbound telemarketer to work as part of the dynamic & friendly sales team.

Dear Sirs,

I'm fairly sure that I would not be good at this job. I am afraid of the telephone (something about disembodied voices frightens me like a childhood nightmare). Even if I could overcome this in order to speak to people, I find it difficult to be positive when speaking to other people and my voice has an irritating nasal tone to it. I would guess that this is a liability when it comes to selling whatever it is that you guys sell.

What I can offer you, however, is total and utter loyalty. I don't mean some lazy half-assed sense of duty to do whatever job I am doing to the best of my ability. That's just work ethic, anyone can fake that. I mean that, once I enter into an organisation, I identify with it utterly and completely. Nothing thrills me more than subsuming my ego within something larger than myself, so when I join your company it becomes part of me, like a family.

This means that I will defend your company to the death, do anything to protect it. Your definition of right and wrong becomes my definition of right and wrong. I will lie, cheat and steal for you. I will betray friends if I am asked to, I will take a fall, become a scapegoat. The individual may be lost but the collective must move forward, the greater good must be protected.

Now maybe a telemarketing company doesn't feel it needs to draw on the kamikaze talents of someone who will forswear all independent thought and ethical doubt for the company that employs him. Maybe not. But ask yourself, could there come a day when you need someone who will do anything asked of him, no questions, no doubt, no moral reservations, no fear? Is your past that clean that you can pass this up? Is your company's record that spotless?

You may contact me day or night.

-SEAN LAWSON

Dear Editor

I would not say that I chose the 4WD so much as it chose me. Watching a sitcom one evening, barely taking it in, the advertisements came on and, as the music started up I saw it slicing through an untouched Arctic wasteland as though drawn by huskies. As though drawn on by God himself, all forged of metal and fire. I knew I had to be inside it, driving it, and controlling the primordial force that it possessed.

Jagged guitars and a pumping drum beat drove the message home, told me that my life until now had been incomplete and meaningless. I needed to feel the power that can only come from driving wheels both in front of me and behind me at the same time as I cruised the mean streets of Sydney.

So I caved, went to the 4WD outlet and acquired myself a 4WD. Over time, I grew to depend on the deep guttural thrill of gunning that engine and pretending that the roads I traversed were actually dusty tracks or tropical trails. An environment worthy of the Beast I drove. I grew delusional, fevered, imagined that surrounding cars were ferocious tigers as I crawled along the streets to work, I began to fear them, began to see them everywhere. Couldn't shake them, saw them when I wasn't driving. Felt stalked and hunted.

My family staged an intervention, they sold my beloved beast, bought a nice economical Ford Laser with the money, and I haven't gone near one of those mighty and powerful machines since then.

I'm ready to get back into the game, slowly and indirectly. What better way to do so than by dipping my toes once more, by writing, indirectly and from a distance, about the savage beast that once claimed my very sanity?

-SEAN LAWSON

4WD FEATURE WRITER: "Does the world of 4WD excite you? Are you a very organised person possibly with a 4WD industry or an automotive industry background? Do you have an interest in 4WD and the great Australian outdoors and wouldn't mind reading, writing and talking about them all day long?"

MIDNIGHT CAPTIONER: "We currently seek a captioner to produce captions specifically for inflight news bulletins. The shift commences at midnight."

To whom it may concern,

I'm so committed to this job that I'm writing this cover letter at half past midnight, in order to prove my dedication to typing late at night. Rest assured that the typing was rapid and accurate, and that I do my best work hunched over in front of a glowing blue rectangle at utterly uncivilised hours of the night, typing away, somehow still awake.

Experience you say. Years of last minute assignments hastily hammered-out can attest to this, producing works somehow coherent and riven with sufficient unprepared brilliance to give an entirely respectable distinction average despite faulty referencing and frequently poor research.

Who would have thought that years of procrastination and barely meeting looming deadlines could have prepared so perfectly for a job, could have allowed me to say entirely truthfully that I don't have good time management skills and that it's this very quality which has given me the experience in rapid task-completion to be the graveyard shift captioner that you seek.

-SEAN LAWSON

[Note: Sean actually got this job]

Marketing Trainee: “YOUNG, FUN AND FUNKY MARKETING COMPANY: This young, fast paced Sydney marketing company is BURSTING with ENERGY. Recent success has secured new clients and we are looking for 15+ girls/guys!”

Hello,

It's not a new or profound thing to observe this, but the decline of art coincides with the rise of modern marketing and advertising. However, unlike many people, I see nothing wrong with this, and in fact I welcome and applaud it. Art has always been about selling something, whether it be the prowess of your patron noble or convincing the neighbouring tribe that your goddess was more rounded and fertile.

Art might be dead, but that's no great loss. All the clever people who would once have been wasting their lives painting ceilings or sculpting naked torsos to selfishly promote some rich man with more money than sense, are now busily selling more useful and important things. The only people left in art are the idealists and unskilled hacks. Useless people. Ah, but the marketers! They speak to the masses, they stimulate demand, they read our basest instincts and craft their messages accordingly. They generate ever more buying, more production, more jobs and more prosperity. Who wouldn't in their right mind welcome and applaud this?

How does this relate to this industry and this position? Well, the industry is falling on tough times. I'm not speaking of the recession, but of the plague of cynicism and self-awareness which creeps through the population. People are becoming ever more "clever" and less inclined to absorb the advertising that's there for the good of us all. They selfishly download the TV shows and bypass the fruits of hard working TV advertisers. They ignore the banner ads on web pages. They sit on trains wrapped up in antisocial bubble worlds of books and earphones, never once glancing out at the billboards placed there to helpfully inform them of new products and services. It's a danger to the economy and our way of life. Almost treasonous, really.

What have the noble marketers, Michaelangelo heirs, been doing in response? Guerilla advertising, attempting to remove the choice about whether or not people want to be marketed to. Sneaking advertising in everywhere they can. Creating clever viral campaigns. It's a noble goal, but surely even the top executives must be worrying about its sustainability. Artful as many of these campaigns are, it's a losing battle. People's ability to be tricked is surely finite.

Instead I proposed a different, more direct approach. Marketing is good for us all, why should marketers be hiding and jumping out at people? No, consumption of advertising material should be a duty, something one happily does as the price of living in such a prosperous and commodity-filled society. So let's refocus on making people fulfil this duty. Let's grab the reigns of power, make some legislative change. There really ought to be a law mandating a minimum level of acceptable marketing exposure. Say, 3 hours a week? This mandatory approach is far more sustainable than merely trying to trick people. Lets get into the education department, grab the kids, spend time teaching them jingles and slogans instead of reading skills they'll only waste on unproductive books. Let's create a bright future for marketing.

I can help you.

-SEAN LAWSON

The apocalypse began ominously, with a mysterious orange sky-phenomenon in south-eastern Australia. This later turned out to be harmless... except that it indirectly led to an actual apocalypse. As millions of people in NSW tweeted, uploaded photos and videos, commented on the photos and videos and then responded to each others' comments, servers around the world began to crash. First it was Twitter, and then Facebook, and then when Twitter and Facebook were gone people began flocking to YouTube to find clips of the seminal 1990 orange sky movie, *Total Recall*. 80 million hits were racked up in the space of an hour, causing YouTube (which is owned by Google) to implode. Due to a network design oversight, this caused all of Google's services and subsidiaries to crash. When the news reached Wall St Google's share price took a catastrophic and irrecoverable plunge, which also brought the Joint Stock Index to its lowest point since 1930. Bloggers went absolutely crazy with disbelief that Google, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter were all down, freaking out and profusely posting conspiracy theories about Chinese and North Korean cyber hackers. Within an hour, the sudden surge in the world's internet traffic had brought down 80% of all online forums and blogging services, starting a catastrophic downward spiral as more and more people rushing to check out the 'death of the internet' phenomena were channeled into smaller and smaller bottlenecks as server after server collapsed under the stampede. Meanwhile, contagion from the Google price crash had spread to over 83 countries, affecting the IT global sectors indiscriminately, leading to capital flight from California and India, bankrupting the subcontinent causing anarchy in major city centres including Kerala and Delhi, unravelling social divisions and sparking calls for independence by provinces in the north and west of the country. The Indian army responded immediately to quell the secessionist provinces by sending in heavily armed troops leading to bloody skirmishes and millions of refugees flowing into the border countries of Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal. Meanwhile the world's economies, shocked by the triple catastrophies of financial meltdown, global unrest and looming nuclear conflict between India and Pakistan, began to descend into martial law. Within 2 months, all of the governments of the world, with the exception of Mongolia, a couple of central Asian states and New Zealand, had collapsed. Martial law was replaced by gangs resorting to hording and cannibalism. The Taliban launched an offensive and enslaved half of humanity including Africa, China and most of Western Europe. In the meantime, Scandinavians continued to comfortably enjoy warm milk and buttered oats while planning their spring offensive to liberate Denmark from Lashkar-e-Taiba. Princess Mary escaped capture and eloped with Prince Frederick to Tasmania, where they were eaten by walruses. Angry mobs ransacked all seven of Kanye West's East Coast pimped-up houses and beat him to death with his own 17 inch rims. Al Gore continued to campaign across South America on climate change until he lost the USB containing the only remaining copy of his Powerpoint presentation. REM topped the music charts just before all radio services around the world ceased broadcasting for another 600 years...



THE
APOCALYPSE
EVERYONE
IS
TALKING
ABOUT
BOBBY CHEN

ANDREW O'KEEFE IS BETTER THAN YOU

I'll admit this upfront, I have a total hetero-man-crush on Andrew O'Keefe. But then again, so should you. Initially I paid him no attention, thought he was just another random insipid game show host, albeit someone with slightly more stage presence and cheesy wit than most. It turns out, though, that this persona is a character O'Keefe plays. He started out in TV with his sketch comedy impersonations and, essentially, he is playing a cheesy game show host and kinda taking the piss out of folks like Larry Emdur and Eddie McGuire. It's subversive and ironic, you see.

Has success gone to Andrew O'Keefe's head? Maybe! Is he a coke-head or E-fiend? Entirely likely. Is he an asshole? I don't know the guy personally, so I can't deny it! What I do know, though, is something you will soon see for yourself: there are ample reasons, beyond mere game show glamour, for Andrew O'Keefe to think big of himself (if he does that), act like an arrogant asshole (if he is one), and to take whatever drugs he sees fit (if he does that).

Subversive game show charm is just the beginning with this veritable Renaissance Man, because Andrew O'Keefe is a true Renaissance Man. Let's begin with the man's background – he is the son of Supreme Court judge Barry O'Keefe and nephew of Johnny O'Keefe, the rock star. Clearly a distinguished pedigree, and he clearly grew up as a rich kid, attending the plush-as-fuck Jesuit school St Ignatius Riverview, whilst living in Mosman. We shouldn't hold this poshness against him; Renaissance Men are made, not born, and their construction requires starting with certain advantages in life.

Andrew O'Keefe made the most of these advantages his victory in the genetic lottery gave him. Whilst at Riverview, he won the National Schools Debating Championships, then represented Australia internationally. University was a similar story. Whilst attaining an Law degree at Sydney Uni, he took time out to again compete internationally. Once more using words as his weapon of choice, he won the World Improv Comedy Championships in Canada. At some point he also ended up with a diploma that says he is a classically trained singer, and we can only hope that one day there is an Andrew O'Keefe album. I anticipate that it will be a tour-de-force of wryly ironic lyrics with mad riffs and jams.

So now we move into the illustrious professional career of Andrew O'Keefe. After graduating, he got a job with some law firm as intellectual property lawyer, while remaining involved in Theatresports. During his time being a lawyer, he also found time for getting married and acquiring children. Possibly in that order. Then came TV, starting at the sketch comedy show *Big Bite* and then *The Hamish and Andy Show* alongside people like Chris Lilley and um, Hamish and Andy. Then it was the game shows and now that morning show, and who knows what next!

However, TV shows and legal qualifications are not the whole story. Such ephemeral things do not, by themselves, make a true Renaissance Man. To truly become such a thing, one needs generosity of spirit and one needs to give back to one's community. Yes, Andrew also has a social conscience! Or at least some guilt over past indiscretions and behaviour. His chosen field of battle is gender violence, and as such he is currently chairman of the White Ribbon Council (associated with the UN's White Ribbon Day) and also a member of the National Council to Reduce Violence Against Women.

Sure, on TV, he's a cheesy motherfucker. I find him entertaining, you may differ. However, Andrew O'Keefe is clearly not just an empty suit or empty head and this is my point. What have you done with your life?





POSTGRAD STUDENTS OFFICER

Georgie Smith

POSTGRADS!! Did you know there are over 15,000 postgrads at UNSW? That's 1/3 of the whole student body. Guess how many independently elected officers represent this huge cohort? 1. Yep, 1. But not for long... The Postgraduate Council will change all of this. The PGC will have 9 Office Bearers (paid, with measurable duties) and 12 Councillors (unpaid, provide diversity of representative voice) whose sole responsibility will be to make YOUR experience at UNSW the best it can be.

But it's not here yet. In order to exist, Arc's Constitution must be changed. So, if you're an Arc member, come along to an Extraordinary General Meeting to be held Wednesday October 7 at 5pm either in person or via teleconference (details on Arc's website). If you're not a member, JOIN! Only members can vote, and without this vote, there's no Council.

Contact me on postgrad@arc.unsw.edu.au for more information.

ETHNIC AFFAIRS OFFICERS

Aaron Chan & Celeste White

Hi guys! Continuing on from the success of Acceptance Week, the Ethnocultural department has lent a helping hand to the International department in the organisation of International festival.

All in all, events were a great success and feedback positive.

As per usual, the Ethnocultural department has been running the Cultural Diversity Collective (CDC), a weekly social forum where a variety of Ethnocultural issues are discussed. Meetings are held every Monday from 1-2pm at Training Room 1, Blockhouse and is in conjunction with the International collective.

In other news, the Collective has voted for Anna and Felicity to be the Voice candidates for Ethnocultural officer for the upcoming year.

To contact your SRC Ethnocultural representatives for 2009, simply shoot an e-mail to Aaron Chan at a.chan@arc.unsw.edu.au or Celeste White at c.white@arc.unsw.edu.au.

Have fun, stay safe and hope to see you guys around the campus!

EDUCATION OFFICER

Andrew Looi

We had a fantastic rally recently where a bus full of UNSW students joined other students from metropolitan universities. Together we marched to parliament house where Senator Hanson Young spoke.

This was the campaign for fair education for all students that involved:

- o International Student Travel Concessions (International students pay up to \$1,300 more than local students p.a. for transport)
- o Stopping attacks on students
- o Ending Visa Restrictions
- o Safe and affordable accommodation

Imagine if you were an exchange student overseas and had to pay double the rate of what local students pay for travel! So if you want to get involved please contact Andrew Looi – a.looi@arc.unsw.edu.au



District 9

SEAN LAWSON

I'm late to the review party on this one. But still, holy balls, *District 9* is brilliant. It is a smart, thrilling, gritty sci-fi action movie so immersive it makes you forget that everyone is speaking in hileerious Sith Efrican eccents.

Someone called Sharlto Copley "stars" as an ultimately noble pissant of a bureaucrat. The real star is the amusingly named Neil Blomkamp in his debut as director. *District 9* is a director's vision where the actors are just one part of a greater whole. Blomkamp was originally a special-effects guy and there was not one moment in the entire film where the effects were anything less than 100% believable in spite of a mere \$30 million budget.

Why does this work so well? It's an interesting concept and Blomkamp directs the hell out of it. It's a riff on Apartheid, greedy capitalists and military contractor profiteering, refugee camps, the dark and predatory side of humanity. The humans are the racist callous bastards we all know we would be, if we got total power and control over a species of helpless refugee aliens with shiny advanced weapons for the taking.

It's brilliant because it kicks your ass as well as your brain. Blomkamp has figured out what big budget directors have forgotten – that movies need intelligence and story in order to make people actually care about the action sequences. The action is better and more substantial when the people are actually fighting for something real and important that you understand.

Ultra-violent, flesh-exploding, alien supergun fights are better when the reasons for the fight make sense, and the fight carries the plot forward and you fucking catch yourself cheering because the outcome matters. Action and animation complement the good writing, they're not just a fucking substitute.

So, *District 9* perfectly mixes brains with thrilling action. Go see it. Then someone might make more of these types of movies. In fact, after you see it, go see another movie but buy a ticket to this one and then sneak into the one you want to see.

And then send a bomb to Michael Bay or JJ Abrams. ■

Push

THOM LOVEDAY

So apparently *Push* was released to cinemas on 10 September. I was a little surprised as I watched a DVD rip in June. This gives me a chance to review a film near its release for once. Also, I haven't seen it in four months. Yay!

From what I remember, *Push* is a superhero movie, like *Heroes* is a superhero TV show. So people have super powers but are not particularly 'super'. This was incredibly refreshing.

In 2006.

In the meantime we've watched *Heroes* fly too close to the sun, and burn up upon re-entry as it forgot things like consistency, plot, logic and basic writing skill. At least we got Hayden Panettiere, I suppose.

Anyway, back to *Push*. It's basically a rip-off of *Heroes*, which was itself a rip-off of *X-Men*. It's ok. I believe it had a plot, but I don't think I really understood what the fuck was going on four months ago, let alone now. There's some 12-year-old girl, who approaches some twenty-something guy with some sort of plan to use their superpowers to get treasure, or to fight the bad-guys. Actually, I may have just given away the ending. Not that there's much to give away.

It's set in some Asian capital – maybe Hong Kong. There seemed to be a lot of English speakers wherever it was set, so it was probably Hong Kong, as there aren't many films shot in Singapore. If there are other places in Asia where lots of people speak English, it could be there too I guess.

In terms of powers people have, there's some mind-control people, others that fling shit around with their thoughts, some with clairvoyance, and other assorted (read: useless) powers. One of these powers is referred to as the ability to *Push*. I can never remember which one it is, but when reminded, I always think it's not the obvious one [eds: Wikipedia says it's mind-control].

In summation, this is an adequate film, freely available to download several months ago from any good Torrent site. Not that I would recommend, or do, such a thing myself. Fortunately, my flatmate does, and I'm happy to benefit. If you have a convenient arrangement with your flatmate, there are worse ways to spend to 2 hours. Also I think there was a particularly cute girl in this, so if you're the kind of guy or gal that digs brunettes with round faces, there's that too. ■

DUMB PEOPLE

MATT KWAN

I dislike dumb people. This is why I have always been a supporter of the Darwin Awards, whereby dumb people who have died in dumb ways are identified and mocked. However, some dumb dead people seem to slip by the wayside and are, instead, revered. This is unacceptable.

I recently read an article in the Herald about a bloke named Shaun Akehurst who decided to take off his clothes and jump into a lake in the Snowy Mountains. He froze from the cold and drowned. Instead of being mocked for his sheer stupidity, he was lauded by the nation's most reputable newspaper as being a fun-loving daredevil, as if that were a good thing.

His irrationality was described as being merely an underestimation of the water's temperature. This is much too kind. When you go to the Snowy Mountains in winter, even if you have never heard of the place, you would expect it to be cold simply by the name. In any case, most people would know that if it's too cold to be stripping off on dry land, it's too cold to do so in the water. Furthermore, if you so happen to fall into cold water with your clothes on, you keep them on. This is taught in every school in Australia.

Even the term 'daredevil' has been misapplied on Akehurst. 'Latently suicidal' would be a better definition. Not only did he jump into the lake, but decided to keep on swimming despite the chill, which every Australian child knows is the wrong thing to do, because you learn in school that you keep as still as possible and tuck your knees into your chest to minimise the surface area of the body in contact with water. In fact, perhaps he was committing suicide. Did anyone not think of that?

Moving onto the celebrity world, we see more silly risk-taking behaviour leading to deaths, yet no one seems to care. A common theme is drug overdoses. A recent death was that of Australian actor Heath Ledger, who interestingly enough, played a drug addict in the film *Candy*. Upon his death, Ledger was commemorated by many people and given lots of posthumous awards out of sympathy. What baffled me was the complete disregard for the dumb way in which he killed himself.

Ledger was a drug abuser, plain and simple. There is no other way of saying it. Before his death, he had consumed a cocktail of several prescription drugs and the combined effect of them all killed him. He killed himself because he didn't follow medical advice. Even children know how to follow instructions.

Whilst the community is united against drug abuse, there was next to no outrage following Ledger's demise. It seems that if you are famous, you can get away with anything. If it was any other idiot, people would be going: 'Fair dinkum! What an idiot! Served him right, that drongo!' But it didn't happen. Instead, Ledger was revered as some sort of artistic hero.

Some might argue that the manner of death should not affect the way we look at a past life. Heath Ledger made some entertaining films, like *First Knight*, a post-modern take on medieval period dramas. Shaun Akehurst was apparently a successful businessman. Why should one dumb act ruin either of their reputations?

“Wise up and learn some survival skills.”

The answer is that these acts were not simply dumb. They were acts which caused a cessation of life. This runs counter to human nature, which is predicated on self-preservation. Through ridiculous risk-taking activity, Akehurst and Ledger were not acting like normal human beings. It can be concluded that through their irrational deaths, they were most probably not fully mentally up to the level of regular humans.

Others might say that I am just being mean and inflammatory by picking on dead people who did nothing to me. This is true. But stories need to be told. Dumb people are blights on society and cannot be misrepresented as anything other than the losers they are. This is a warning to dumb people to wise up and learn some survival skills.

Hi Gordon,

I work as an apprentice veterinarian and have been given into my care a fruit bat suffering diarrhoea. I am extremely concerned because my brain has begun to swell and I understand that the deadly and unstoppable Hendra virus is spread by this species. I wonder if these two things are connected?

MATT, SRC

Matthew,

When God created the world and made sure that all fruits were forbidden, he knew that he would suck in the adulterous and the deviant. I once ordered a marvellous contraption from Canada called the "Fruit Machine" which measured involuntary pupil dilations in response to certain stimuli. Identifying 'homosexual' was the game. Unfortunately the machine was faulty and I lost control of my own pupils during each examination.

I recommend that you sleep upside down and defecate over yourself as the fruit bat does. This will not cure the Hendra virus, but it may stop people from sending you their bats.

Lurk

Doctor Lurk,

Long time listener, first time caller. I thought I'd share with you a serious mental problem I've developed, and seek your advice. For years I've been a fan of the breakfast 2Day show with Kyle and Jackie O, and I feel that my supportive comments on their website forum, where I called Kyle a "massive wanker" many times to sustain his bilious mood at a 24 hour peak for my own amusement, has given me anti-social personality disorder. It's really out of hand. I have been stealing property, committing crimes, and at the park recently I spent three hours offering almonds to a parrot with the almond covered in hummus. Parrots hate hummus. I feel no remorse. Is there any way back?

TIM, Yr 5, Bass High

Dear Caster,

Thank you for your private letter, which I've decided to publish. I'm glad you brought up the issue of confidentiality, a term I understand well. I think you're a great athlete and it would be terrible to see you lose confidentiality in your abilities.

I was in fact at the Royal Hotel yesterday morning discussing the price of mangoes (very expensive) when this subject came up. I told the barman, I said, look - I have a pair of testicles, and do you see me sprinting 800 meters in world record time? Jerry the barman prised his gaze from my bared scrotum to consider the point, but at this time the police entered through the saloon doors and I had to dive out the window, missing his reply. But I did hear from Jerry later that the officers shook their heads and told him that 'Speedy Gonzalez' had eluded them again.

You have nothing to be ashamed of, and I'm sure you will learn to cope with this huge problem.

LURK

Timothy,

I don't understand why this fellow is so popular. What is funny about drinking breast milk and lighting one's farts? These are the normal, accepted modern day privileges of the white male.

Your Mum is fat.

DR GORDON LURK, professional doctor.

Dr Lurk



O my God,
it's true...!

