Secret life of cows and their collars

By LANA BEST

Dairy cows sporting large blue tracking devices and giant numbers on their bodies at the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture Dairy Research Centre mark a whole new area of research that could make dairy farming more sustainable in the future.

Farmers’ use of GPS technology to take the guesswork out of farm management and save big dollars is now becoming commonplace.

Originally used by the CSIRO to track the movements of semi-wild cattle on huge Queensland properties, cow collars were offered to TIA to see what data could come from the placid creatures in their relatively small Burnie paddocks.

And while you could be forgiven for thinking that it wouldn’t be hard to keep track of a dairy cow, TIA dairy centre manager Dr Richard Rawnsley pointed out that even dairy farmers don’t know what their cows get up to at night.

“What a dairy cow does out in the paddock during the day or night might be useful to understand because it could influence how they are fed when they come into the shed to be milked,” he said.

“It would be great to know if individual cows are being bullied away from feed or there is water in the paddock; if the cow first back to pasture is getting all the good grass and therefore becoming a better-performing milker or if the cow always at the front of the herd then suddenly appears at the back and is injured or lame.”

Cow collar research: The Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture is using tracking collars on dairy cows to see if the data produced leads to more milk production.

“We want to know if there’s a change in a cow’s behaviour and whether that could mean she’s sick or coming into heat.

“The cows not only track where the cows graze, but sensors indicate when they lower and lift their head, when they ruminate, urinate, walk, rest or drink.

“Now we just have to make sense of all the data and see if it correlates with what we actually observed the cow doing.”

Richard and his TIA colleagues Dr James Hill and Mark Freeman watched 12 numbered cows for six hours a day for the 14 days collars were on the cows, recording every movement they made.

Six cows were fed grain, six were not; six were the lowest milk producers and six were the highest.

If the collars prove to be accurate recorders of cow behaviour, that information could give vital clues to how to get more milk from each cow.

“It could determine how much feed to give each cow, if and when more pasture is required, or if a problem in the paddock needs to be addressed,” Richard said.

A second batch of cow collars will soon arrive from CSIRO, possibly solar powered and smaller, so that the research can continue.

In the meantime, Richard and James have reams of data to translate and algorithms to apply as they attempt to work out what certain cow behaviours really mean.

There’s a possibility that future data gathered by the collars could be available worldwide through the State’s Sense-T network.

Dementia care and education the theme of two ‘firsts’ for UTAS

By AARON SMITH

A NEW associate degree in dementia care will help Australia’s aged care industry prepare for the nation’s expected increases in people diagnosed with dementia.

And it is readily accessible to people in rural areas.

The first of its kind in Australia, the course is being taught in Tasmania, Adelaide, Canberra, Sydney and Newcastle.

Professor James Vickers, head of the School of Medicine at UTAS and co-director of the Wicking Dementia Research and Education Centre which designed the course, expects student numbers to continue growing.

With the first baby boomers reaching retirement age next year, Australia is set to experience an explosion in demand for residential aged care facilities.

The sector faces a critical shortage of skilled workers able to provide quality care for people with dementia which will worsen without affirmative action.

The new associate degree is the first step in filling this gap, giving the existing workforce opportunities to upgrade their qualifications, and training the future workforce.

Recognising that dementia is a terminal illness, those taking the degree will also learn to apply palliative care to dementia, a relationship poorly recognised in the current workforce.

There are no entry requirements or exams and a full-time student support officer provides student assistance.

“There is a small amount of face-to-face delivery but the majority of the course is delivered online,” Prof. Vickers said.

Dementia is also the focus of UTAS’ very first offering as part of the Massive Open Online Course phenomenon.

The free online course, Understanding Dementia, has also been developed by Wicking. It went live at 9am on Monday 29 July. “We now have 7,100 registrants around Australia and the world,” said the Dean of the Faculty of Health Science, Professor Denise Fassett, at press time, “with almost 2,500 logging on to start the course in the first 24 hours.

International registrations are dominated by students from the UK, USA, Canada, New Zealand, India and the Philippines.
Tenacious UTAS ‘underdogs’ take rugby silver at the Malaysian Student Games

BY SAMANTHA MOUNTFORD

They may have lacked size and numbers but certainly not courage and tenacity – the UTAS Malaysian student rugby team proved a formidable force at the recent national Malaysian Student Games in Sydney.

One of the smallest teams competing and with just two reserves to call upon, the UTAS team fought their way into the final against Victoria, which they dominated for most of the game before going down 15-12.

The MASA Student Games is the largest sporting event for Malaysians in Australia, with all seven states sending representatives to compete on a national level.

The UTAS side was the largest sporting event for Malaysians in Australia, with all seven states sending representatives to compete on a national level.

The UTAS side was competing for only the second year and still fresh-faced. Their more seasoned opponents appeared to have not only an advantage in collective stature but could also field complete replacement teams.

Team manager and player Daniel “Donny” Noor commented: “I think the team did extremely well; we were dubbed the underdogs of the tournament and we still managed to secure the silver medal.”

Coach Trent Henderson, former head coach of the UTAS rugby team, took on the role of teaching the Malaysians tactics and skills that paid off.

The team also trained with UTAS rugby team, took on the

The feedback from the NSW referees was that they had never seen players tackle or hit the rucks with such force and aggression. Opposition ball carriers would attempt to avoid sections of the field in the vicinity of Donny or team captain Najib.”

Donny added: “The other teams were shocked by our skills, speed and handling of the ball.”

Trent singled out players to foster effective and inspiring communication that alleviates environmental issues and conflicts, and solves the problems that cause them.
UTAS shows the way in midlands renewal research

**Research**

Rejuvenating the Tasmanian Midlands environment: Three UTAS projects funded by the Australian Research Council are working with Greening Australia to research how vegetation and wildlife can regenerate degraded Tasmanian Midlands habitats.

**BY SHARON WEBB**

UTAS and Greening Australia are at the forefront in rejuvenating the Tasmanian midlands environment in a new project involving UTAS researchers ‘asking’ bandicoots, bettongs and quolls how they perceive their habitats.

In the project, run by Dr Menna Jones from the School of Zoology, the animals will wear GPS collars so that researchers can track them to understand how they use the landscape.

Funded by a $497,000 Australian Research Council grant, Restoring resilience in wildlife populations is the latest of three UTAS midlands projects funded by the council.

It follows two other projects on the regeneration of vegetation in the midlands: Professor David Bowman’s almost-complete research on the die-back in eucalypts and the replacement of tree species and Professor Brad Potts’ current trials of different eucalypt species for the area, taking into account anticipated effects of global warming.

These projects were funded by ARC grants of around $500,000 each, the work done in conjunction with Greening Australia, with whom UTAS has successfully partnered over the past four years to underpin their large scale Midlands Restoration Program.

Dr Jones’ project will collaborate with Professor Potts.

Describing it as one she’s wanted to do for ten years, she says it’s multi-layered research looking at how degraded habitat and roosting feral cat numbers affect native animals and woodland birds – and the potential future if environmentalists use that knowledge to restore habitat elements to build wildlife numbers.

“The aim is to find out the structural elements of habitat that facilitate vulnerable birds and animals at risk of predation by feral cats.”

“There is much work going on botanically in the midlands with habitat restoration and engagement with farmers,” Dr Jones said. “We wanted to add the wildlife component.”

“The aim is to find out the structural elements of habitat that facilitate vulnerable birds and animals at risk of predation by feral cats.

“We'll ask: Is it a good habitat? There might be a piece of woodland that looks like good habitat for animals and birds, but it could be over-grazed beneath the tree canopy or all the dead logs may have been taken by firewood gatherers or all the rocks may have been removed.”

To do this, researchers will use tracking collars on animals, including feral cats, to find out where they spend their time and what the attributes of those habitats are.

Another technique is to place food in both safe and risky areas risky areas away from the shelter of remnant patches of native vegetation with the aim of finding out how much food is eaten and therefore how much risk animals will take to get food.

GPS tracking collars aside, the project will be technology rich, using cameras for mammal surveys and LiDAR: laser plane runs using remote sensing to photograph the landscape and record habitat structure.

Dr Jones describes the work as “cutting edge animal ecology research”, the aim is to design restoration to buffer and connect remnant patches of native vegetation, helping Greening Australia to maximise the benefit of landscape-scale restoration and connectivity projects.

**Midlands tree die-back challenges researchers**

Professor David Bowman’s research has answered the question of why eucalypt populations are declining in Tasmania’s Midlands.

After theories ranging from damage by possums to drought and climate change, he has found the cause to be land use changes, secondary clearing as people intensify farming practices and regeneration failure of remaining trees.

“As they knocked out vegetation, farmers limit the capacity of paddock trees to regenerate,” Prof. Bowman said. “We’re creating a heter landscape.”

Prof. Bowman’s research looked to the anticipated tree cover of the Midlands under climate change.

His team found there will be challenges for maintaining and restoring eucalypt cover in the Midlands – but it’s still possible.

“But will existing varieties be tolerant of postulated climate change?” Prof. Bowman asked. “We can modify land practices and get land cover back. But will the current species be able to grow in 50 years time?”

Taking into account the trade-off between tree growth, carbon storage and water use, the conclusion was that there is no quick fix for Tasmania’s Midlands; it will be 50–100 years before we see the same amount of carbon in unlogged woodland.

In some related research, Prof. Potts’ team is trialling Eucalyptus pauciflora as the main tree species.

**Eucalyptus trials for warmer midlands climate**

DECADES OF research at the School of Plant Science on eucalypt genetics has shown large genetic differences may occur between provenances of the same species, particularly when they are sourced from different environments.

Professor Potts’ team is examining which seed sources of the eucalypt species being used for restoration plantings in the midlands of Tasmania are best for planting in the face of climate change.

“In the past we believed that it was best to use local seed because it was likely to be best adapted due to generations of natural selection,” Prof. Potts said.

“But this may no longer be true as the climate warms.”

“Over the last few years we have planted seed collections from many provenances of Eucalyptus pauciflora and E. teretis at three sites in the Borthwell/Meadowbank area; one site was damaged during the high temperatures last January providing valuable data on which provenances can best survive such extreme climatic events.”

“New field trials, including E. ovata, are being prepared for planting in the Ross and Cressey areas in collaboration with Greening Australia.”

The project aims to create a genetic framework to inform future planting decisions for forest restoration and carbon plantings, not only in the midlands of Tasmania, but in Australia generally. There are three PhD students working on this project.
Genetic modification of Tasmanian crops is a political choice

Science does not support the continued ban on all GM crops maintains

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR RENÉ VAUCLINCI, head of the

UTAS School of Plant Science.

The announcement of the terms of reference for a review of Tasmania’s moratorium on genetically modified (GM) crops has seen a predictable torrenting of barbs between proponents and opponents, including a call for elucidation from researchers (‘Farmers Waiting on Science’, Mercury, 26 June).

That’s my cue as a plant scientist.

First I must make it clear that there is no credible evidence that there are human health risks in eating genetically modified food. Furthermore, there is no theoretical scientific basis for such fears.

GM food is created by inserting genes (DNA) from one species into that of another. GM allows the movement of genes between species that can’t be hybridised in nature, e.g. from bacteria to plants, or from plant to plant, therefore increasing the genetic variation available for the improvement of species useful to humans. Genetic variation is the basis for improving plant and animal species, just as it is for natural evolutionary processes.

Every living thing contains DNA, and almost everything we eat contains DNA. If you were to eat a kind of wheat that was modified to contain some genes from beef, for example, it would be similar to eating a beef sandwich. What’s the big deal? When you eat a beef sandwich the DNA from beef and wheat get mixed up in your stomach before you digest it.

Of course, if a food species was engineered to produce a toxin dangerous to humans, this could be dangerous. The size of this risk would largely depend on the gene involved.

The one toxin-producing gene that is commonly used in GM crops is a gene taken from the bacteria Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt) which naturally produces insecticidal toxins. But Bt is not dangerous to humans or other mammals. It is approved for organic crops where it can be sprayed on plants to combat insect pests.

The production of GM crops is one of the most regulated of all technologies associated with food production and before new genes are approved they must be reviewed. However, if there are problems with using GM crops most of these relate to the containment of GM genes (contamination of other plants) and this has received much attention from scientists.

Plant genes can move through pollen grains or through their propagules (usually seeds but possibly cuttings or tubers). Pollen is the most troublesome of these, as in some cases nature has engineered the species reproductive system to allow long-distance travel of their pollen grain.

Crops such as canola and maize are of this type (called outcrossers) while crops such as wheat and peas are inbreeders and their pollen tends to travel no further than within the same flower as they mostly stay closed. Thus the risk of contamination is greatest with outcrossers and most of the news coverage relating to the contamination problem has been with crops such as corn and canola. These can hybridise with varieties of their respective species as well as with closely related species.

Pollen from GM maize, for example, can hybridise with nearby corn fields and thus contaminate them. However, corn cannot hybridise with canola or with most plant species and these are thus safe of contamination risks.

In the case of corn, the contamination problem is greatest in the region from which corn originates (Central and South America) as this region has some wild relatives of corn which could be contaminated. However, most crops have no wild relatives in Tasmania as all crops originate from other continents and the Tasmanian flora is thus safe from GM crops.

The containment problem with GM crops in Tasmania would thus be one where some crops could become contaminated with GM genes. To prevent gene flow, positive steps such as minimum isolation distances could be regulated. However, there are also biotechnological answers to this type of problem, such as engineered crop sterility. My personal opinion about this is that containment is not a large issue as the GM traits are not dangerous.

Overall, there is little scientific evidence that GM is a dangerous technology for Tasmania. It is a political choice to decide whether the technology is acceptable or not and this choice should be based on economic analysis of the benefits and risks of maintaining the ban on GMO in Tasmania.

NW manufacturers feeling the heat, says new report

BY ANNA OSBORN

THE NORTH-WEST Coast’s key manufacturing sector is facing tough times and businesses need to collaborate to survive.

The industry, which underpins some of Tasmania’s biggest economic drivers, has been analysed in a UTAS study: Mapping the Connectors – Engineering and Engineering Services Sector.

The report, produced in partnership by the UTAS Cradle Coast campus and Enterprise Connect, analysed the business and relationship footprint of the region’s manufacturing sector and its supply chains.

The sector is a key employer, generating over 5,000 direct jobs. It also dominates the output field with over $3 million at the end of 2012.

Fifty-six businesses took part in the study. Each firm’s history, challenges, business relationships, skills and future aspirations were captured, in a bid to further support and understand the multi-million dollar sector.

The experience and capabilities of the sector are enormous; the sector shows great innovation which has driven its resilience and success so far,” UTAS Cradle Coast Campus Industry and Development Office and co-researcher Dayna Broun said.

“However, the industry is facing some pretty tough times,” Enterprise Connect innovative regions facilitator and co-researcher Sarah Jones said.

“The industry was feeling the heat from recent global events, where business was becoming far more competitive.

“Business opportunities with current customers in the state are contracting as other industries such as forestry face challenges,” Sarah said.

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graduations in Hangzhou and Shanghai

BY LIZ BAILES

Students from Hangzhou and Shanghai have celebrated receiving joint degrees from Chinese universities and the University of Tasmania.

UTAS runs joint international programs with the International College of the Zhejiang University of Technology (ZUT) in Hangzhou and the AINE institute of the Shanghai Ocean University (SOU) to deliver Australian courses in management, computer science and information systems.

The partnership has been operating successfully since 2002; at the conclusion of their studies, students receive a degree from both institutions.

This month 77 students graduated on the Pingfeng campus of ZUT, receiving computer science degrees after completing four years of study. And 339 students graduated with degrees from UTAS/SOU in the Bachelor of Information Systems, Bachelor of Business, and Bachelor of Management.

Graduation ceremonies were conducted in both English and Chinese, and attended by the UTAS Chancellor, Mr Michael Field AC, and the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Peter Rathjen.

Mr Field said that the university was delighted to be part of the international endeavour.

“The University of Tasmania and the university council appreciate very strongly the advantages of having this international dimension to our university and have worked hard to advance it.”

UTAS Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Rathjen said:

“For nearly 1,000 years universities have been places where scholars from different nations have joined together to form learning communities. Indeed, universities have been truly international institutions from the time they began.

“The benefits of these international exchanges have been incalculable, resulting in the transfer of knowledge and cultural practices from one society to another, and a growth in international understanding.”

“China graduations: Students entertain in a musical interlude at a ceremony at the Shanghai Ocean University.”

“China graduations: Two Bachelor of Business graduates are in high spirits at the Shanghai Ocean University.”

“China graduations: Bachelor of Business graduates celebrate at the Shanghai Ocean University.”

“China graduations: Chancellor Michael Field looks on as Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Rathjen presents a certificate of high achievement in the Bachelor of Business/Bachelor of Management degrees to Du Yafei.”

“China graduations: Zhou Renzhi gives the graduate address at the Shanghai Ocean University.”

“China graduations: Two Bachelor of Business graduates are in high spirits at the Shanghai Ocean University.”

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Amanda Cromer
TIA Corporate Communications Officer

Before UTAS...
I was a senior creative at Red Jelly, an advertising agency in Hobart (particularly proud of our winning pitch on ABC’s The Gruen Transfer – the one putting Tassie’s case for hosting the next Olympics). Before that I worked for a decade in Sydney, in media and publishing – mainly as a journalist, stylist and editor for magazines and books – but also, notoriously, as the gossip columnist for the Sydney Morning Herald. A year of non-stop celebrity events and high-profile parties was priceless for teaching me about diplomacy, deadlines, networking and champagne – although my liver definitely thanked me once all the high-flying was over. And I’m saving up the (previously unpublishable) stories for a tell-all memoir…

I’m passionate about my job because … TIA is all about world-class produce and discoveries, international travel, ideas, finding efficiencies, innovation and education – all things I love!

I’m inspired by … Good food and wine, my family, surfing, linguistics, crime writing, Tasmanian history and mysteries, islands, maps and landscapes, botanical art, other people’s achievements… the list is very long.

When I’m not working, I… am generally working. It’s a habit I’m working hard on to break.

My family life includes… Much antique shopping (with husband) and the discussing of Lego (with son). With a bit of endless home reno thrown in for fun.

I’m currently reading… Sherlock Holmes.

Lately I’m listening to… Muse.

I enjoy my job because… of the non-stop learning of new things (one day it’s the maternal instincts of earwigs, the next it’s the ‘stars’ in sparkling wines), the opportunity to contribute something to Tasmania, and the chance to work with super-smart, passionate people.
Bouquets

Four UTAS academics have been awarded international medals recognising the excellence of work recently published in the International Journal of Maritime Engineering. The team received the 2012 Medal of Distinction by the Royal Institution of Naval Architects in London for work on wave impact on high-speed catamaran ferries. The published work concerned research on high-speed catamarans undertaken in collaboration with INCAT Tasmania, work supported by an ARC Linkage research project which began at the School of Engineering in 2005.

Researching the long life of Australian meat: The TIA research team includes student Charlaine Perales, Associate Professor Tom Ross, students Pauline Savajols and Anne Brekelmans, and TIA research fellow in food microbiology, Joy Kochanichott.

TIA tackles meaty topics

BY AMANDA CROMER

A ustralian meat has the longest shelf-life in the world, but we don’t know why… yet. It has an equally enviable reputation for meat safety.

International customers of Australian meats noticed the exceptionally long shelf-life leading to the discovery that while Australian export meat can have 20–30 weeks of refrigerated shelf-life, most other countries only achieve 10–12 weeks.

The Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture has been announced as the winner of a national tender worth $1.1 million over three years to find out the secret to our meat’s long shelf-life and to develop methods to further enhance its safety.

A large team has been assembled to work on the project, headed by Professor Mark Tamplin and Associate Professor Tom Ross from TIA’s Food Safety Centre.

Assoc. Prof. Ross explained that the main objectives are to understand and assure the unusually long shelf-life of Australian red meats, and to find better ways to prevent contamination with food poisoning bacteria.

“For Tasmania, in particular, this research will enhance the reputation of the ‘Tasmanian brand’ image.”

“We also need to be able to explain to international customers of Australian meat exactly how that is being achieved. This maintains and extends our trade access to international markets,” he said.

For Tasmania, in particular, this research will enhance the reputation of the ‘Tasmanian brand’ image.

Prof. Tamplin added: “Australia is in an enviable position, in that so many of the foods we produce are known around the world as being high-quality and extremely safe.

“This new project is an opportunity to use quality science to explain that advantage and to ensure Australian meat maintains its standing in the world.”

Collaborative research at Cradle Coast

TWO COLLABORATIVE research projects in the North West have been funded through the UTAS Institute for Regional Development’s Cross Boundary Research Fund.

This year’s funding will allow researchers at the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture to further their work on developing drought tolerant lucerne fodder crops, and the second project will look at how the UTAS University Preparation Program has shaped the lives of its Cradle Coast students.

TIA’s Dr Keith Pembleton and Sathish Puthigae from Fonterra New Zealand were awarded $5000 through the Cross Boundary Research Fund for a project entitled Giving drought the cold shoulder: utilising molecular biology to better understand the relationship between freezing tolerance and drought tolerance in forage crops.

The Cross Boundary Research Fund is designed to encourage collaborative research projects across the UTAS Cradle Coast Campus, the university and the region. The fund aims to support new and emerging researchers who are working on innovative projects, with up to $5,000 allocated to eligible projects that meet the selection criteria.

Dr Keith Pembleton:
Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture
Local domestic goddess takes the world by storm

BY ELIZABETH BAILES

Vogel Award-winning author Dr Danielle Wood has already received local acclaim for her biography of Tasmanian housewife extraordinaire Marjorie Bligh but now the rest of the world is getting in on the act.

The book has been released in the USA by Faber & Faber as Housewife Superstar! Advice (and Much More) from a Nonagenarian Domestic Goddess, and in the Netherlands as Van die Dingen. It is receiving international media attention for its quirky advice, which includes everything from possum removal and marriage tips to quick-fixes for eyeliner emergencies (spent matches).

The book is making US best-seller lists: “At first, publishers were quick-fixes for eyeliner emergencies which includes everything from attention for its quirky advice, is receiving international media acclaim for her biography of Tasmanian housewife extraordinaire Marjorie Bligh but now the rest of the world is getting in on the act. I think Americans will understand her as being the same mould as Martha Stewart,” she said.

“Marjorie was never ‘just’ a housewife. She made homemaking the wellspring of public attention.”

Producing Housewife Superstar! involved thorough research, including reading the meticulous daily diaries Marjorie gave to the Tasmanian Archives.

“Marjorie documented her life incredibly thoroughly, giving us an incredible record of changes in Australian domesticity across the twentieth century,” Danielle said.

The book was shortlisted for the 2012 national Nib Award for excellence in research, sharing the shortlist with, among others, Kate Grenville, and the Nib’s winner Jane Gleeson-White.

“Marjorie was never ‘just’ a housewife. She made homemaking the wellspring of public attention.”


to modern interpretations of his understanding to his representation achieves this end to bring a clearer symbolism, philosophically and culturally relationship in colonial spaces often through radical and unequal and racially based power relations. In the two parts of this book the authors, from India, Australia, NZ and Britain – examine the ways colonial administrators accumulated and managed information and knowledge about the places and peoples under their jurisdiction.

This book examines the biography of the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius. It seeks to further understand the author of the Historia Augusta alongside the reminiscences of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius. Geoff W. Adams arrives at this understanding through a study of a wide range of literary texts. Marcus Aurelius was a very important ruler of the Roman Empire, who has had an impact symbolically, philosophically and historically upon how the Roman Empire has been envisioned. Adams achieves this end to bring a clearer understanding to his representation and to modern interpretations of his highly interpreted and romanticised representations in the ancient texts.
The work
Unravelling: emotional art in the Atrium

The raw emotions of women shouldering the burden of adversity, change were highlighted in the recent Unravelling exhibition at the UTAS Cradle Centre campus Atrium Gallery. Ulverstone-based artist Louise Daniels said her inspiration for the 13 drawings in the exhibition came from a series of small aluminium wire sculptures she created, representing the emotional unravelling of women.

Three figures were then depicted in large, figurative charcoal drawings dramatically highlighting distress, mental illness and trauma. Louise suggested that the drawings represent the stress of change and transformation in the North-West region, and how regional women shoulder this strain.

“The process of creating the women in wire, then recreating them as drawings allowed me to make a more powerful statement about how women deal with the burden of change and uncertainty,” she explained.

“Most of the figures in my drawings are wrestling some control, gradually unwinding the pressures and freeing themselves from the binding tension; unfortunately some are falling apart, the job too hard… slowly unravelling.”

Unravelling: by Louise Daniels, charcoal on paper, 75 cm x 55 cm unframed.

Nursing skills highlighted in award-winning film

BY LANA BEST

A 24-YEAR-OLD, second-year nursing student at the University of Tasmania’s Darlinghurst campus has won first prize in the NSW Nurses and Midwives’ Association Short Film awards which were held recently as part of International Nurses Day events.

Ciara Rafferty, who also has a Bachelor of Arts obtained at the University of NSW, won $5,000 and is already planning to spend it on a family’s struggle with grief.

The bittersweet short also suggests that attention to detail is an important part of a nurse’s skill set.

“It’s a dramatic tale, with an unexpected twist, and the entire cast and crew are UTAS students,” Ciara said.

“I’m thinking about entering it in some other film festival and you never know, one day I might even make a film for Triopet!”

Ciara, who said she is enjoying her nursing course and looking forward to a stint of practical placement this month, has a preference for cardiac nursing and midwifery, and is hoping to work eventually on a cardiac ward.

Nursing role: Sydney UTAS nursing student Ciara Rafferty won first prize in the NSW Nurses and Midwives’ Association Short Film awards with her moving short film, Arthur.