

# Australasian Update

The Dart Centre Australasia newsletter

Winter, 2005



## After the tsunami • • •

The Dart Center hosted an April 15 conference – “The Tsunami Aftermath: Consequences for Journalism and the Region” – at the University of Washington in Seattle, bringing together journalists, scientists and health care professionals from around the world.

Australasia was ably represented by *The Australian*’s Kimina Lyall – who shared her experiences as a witness to and reporter of the Boxing Day tsunami (a summary of which is available online at [www.dartcenter.org/articles/personal\\_stories/lyall\\_kimina.html](http://www.dartcenter.org/articles/personal_stories/lyall_kimina.html)) – as well as News Ltd’s National Training Director Sharon Hill and Dart Australasia’s Cait McMahon and Trina McLellan.

### • • • What attendees said

(interviews at and after the conference):

► “(The tsunami was an) emotionally wrenching but amazing time ... even after Iraq ... You see all these things. You report all these things. You try to remain distant and you move on. Not this time.”

*Hal Bernton, Seattle Times reporter who covered tsunami in Banda Aceh*

► “You’re serving everybody, 18 hours a day, and at the same time scavenging for food, water, etc. You don’t always know when someone, including yourself, is coming undone. After 30 days straight in Iraq, I collapsed and was out for 10 days. Bosses don’t get that you need the downtime. They treat you like it’s a normal day back home, because that is what it is for them.”

*Brian Rooney, ABC Correspondent*

► “This tragedy produced some of the most profound reporting from the field in a very long time. Something happened to journalists this time, the detached, robotic reporting that has become de rigueur, evaporated. Many correspondents admitted they found it completely impossible to maintain artificial detachment.”

*Chris Cramer, head, CNN International*

► “At the BBC we had dozens of correspondents fighting to go, so we had no problems. Almost anyone who went would have had a conversation with the editor before they left, checking they were happy to go, we stayed in touch with them throughout their assignments, they were decompressed on the way out and there were constant conversations with them while they were away and lots of follow-up now that they’re back.”

*Jeremy Hillman  
BBC’s New York correspondent*

► “One of the things that really struck me (immediately after the tsunami) was just how unlike myself I was and my brain didn’t tend to work, I couldn’t control the slow motion and every thought I had, even a week later, came to me really slowly and then when it hit me, it hit like a tonne of bricks and I would forget things. I didn’t feel like me. Now, when I go to a situation like that and interview someone, I hope to remember that. I’m not interviewing this person, I can’t make judgments about this person, because I have no idea who they really are, this person who was being presented to me, and they might not be themselves for some time.”

*Kimina Lyall,  
then south-east Asian correspondent for  
The Australian, after conference*

► “I’m a firm advocate of education before you do this kind of work. I think that, you know, just taking someone who is completely naive and dropping them in the deep end and expecting them to swim, potentially, could lead to trouble. There’s nothing like preparing people properly, nothing like good education, so that they know what the potential risks are, they know what perhaps some of the signs and symptoms are so should they find themselves experiencing difficulty they would know what to do. So, I would really urge all news organisations to be prepared on this particular question, don’t let journalists “wing it” and try and find their own solutions, because my experience and what I’ve seen it consistently over the past four or five years that, if that’s the case, journalists make mistakes and they get themselves increasingly deeper into distress. They try (to work through it) but in maladaptive ways and, even the working through process becomes maladaptive, in a sense further entrenching the difficulties. It’s very difficult for people to heal themselves when they don’t quite know what’s going on.”

*Canadian psychiatrist Anthony Feinstein*

► “What I heard today was that the tsunami challenged journalists and journalism in new ways. On the one hand it challenged their personal capacity to cope with an overwhelming story. And it challenged the capacity of news organisations to support them. News organisations are looking

for ways to do that as a result of the tsunami, so it will change the culture of news management and the culture of support for journalists. It also changed, or challenged, the careful distance that reporters maintain while writing their stories. It shook up their sense of, their ability to remain cool and calm and distant. And the absence of a calm, cool, distant voice to accurately convey the meaning of an event forced them to write in new ways, to speak in new ways, to find new kinds of story-telling techniques, to go to the first person at times, to break some of the rules of journalism in order to convey to outsiders, to bear witness to the rest of us, effectively and accurately, about the fact and impact of what they saw.”

*Bruce Shapiro, contributing editor,  
The Nation (and Dart US board member)*

► “I think we saw what journalists see when they encounter a tragedy of this nature for the first time, the magnitude of the tragedy and the human loss and the overwhelming feeling that you have when you come into this situation. The incredible stories, of not only the story itself about the tsunami and death and the destruction, but the survival of the journalists in the midst of that and what story they need to tell to the public as a whole. And how the story continues beyond that. I think it’s important to note that the Dart Center emphasises what I call Act II journalism which, basically, means that there’s a story that goes much further than just the first few days after a disaster. That the story goes into the spirit of the people who are rebuilding their lives and their communities and what it takes to do that. The story is broader and much deeper and must be told and I think, sometimes, we as journalists, have difficulty doing that.”

*Joe Hight, Managing Editor,  
The Daily Oklahoman, (Dart US board member)*

► “I can see some signs that people who wouldn’t have talked about the emotional burden of covering the tsunami – or any event of that kind before – are now willing to discuss it and talk about it in front of a large audience, which is quite remarkable.”

*Professor Roger Simpson,  
Dart Professor of Journalism and Trauma,  
University of Washington*

### Report on international conference sessions held in Seattle

Summaries of all sessions are available online at  
[www.dartcenter.org/articles/special\\_features/tsunami\\_conference.html](http://www.dartcenter.org/articles/special_features/tsunami_conference.html)

## Covering London terrorist attacks?

If you are covering such acts of violence, you might find the Dart Centre’s resources

– and those of the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ISTSS) – of help. Start with

[www.dartcenter.org/resources/selfstudy/2\\_terrorism/text\\_02.html](http://www.dartcenter.org/resources/selfstudy/2_terrorism/text_02.html) and [www.istss.org/terrorism/news\\_consumption.htm](http://www.istss.org/terrorism/news_consumption.htm)

# What's happening internationally • • •

## ► Ochberg Fellowship 2005

After skillfully reporting the south Asian tsunami, the Beslan siege, the Madrid train bombings, the terror attacks of September 11 and co-ordinating news and behind-the-scenes responses to the brutal slaying of colleague Paul Moran in Iraq, experienced ABC reporter Philip Williams has been awarded a prestigious international journalism fellowship.

The Dart Centre for Journalism and Trauma – Australasia has announced Williams has won Australasia's Ochberg Fellowship 2005. As an Ochberg Fellow, Williams will be part of an international fellowship program with eight other mid-career journalists from around the world chosen by the Dart Center in the United States, which is based in Seattle.

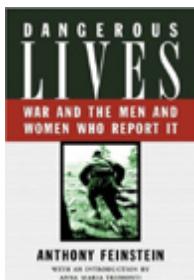
According to Dart's Australasian director, Cait McMahon, Williams' contribution to journalism goes beyond excellence in the profession of his craft.

"He has consistently demonstrated a sensitivity to the difficult situations he has reported on and a concern for those around him, including those working for him and those in the affected communities he was covering," she said.

Ms McMahon said this year's fellows would attend a special, two-day seminar in Toronto, Canada, in November, 2005, on the role emotional trauma plays in coverage of violent events.

## ► War reporting and trauma: a new book

Canadian psychiatrist Anthony Feinstein has written *Dangerous Lives: War And The Men And Women Who Report It*, pictured, a revealing book based on fascinating research Dr Feinstein has conducted with war correspondents and camera operators.



If you are – or work with – a war correspondent, this book will help you understand the pressures they face and the consequences of their work. To read three reviews – by Dart Europe's Mark Brayne, PTSD expert and Dart Center founder Dr Frank Ochberg and clinical psychology graduate student River Smith – visit [www.dartcenter.org/articles/books/dangerous\\_lives2.html](http://www.dartcenter.org/articles/books/dangerous_lives2.html)

To see reviews of other books in this area, visit [www.dartcenter.org/articles/books](http://www.dartcenter.org/articles/books)

## ► The UK's NICE guidelines

Dart's Europe team, headed by Mark Brayne, has been especially busy and effective this year. Something that was raised on their website ([www.dartcenter.org/europe](http://www.dartcenter.org/europe)) – and debated in a special Frontline Forum in London recently – was the establishment by Britain's National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) of "the most comprehensive guidelines compiled to date on effective treatments for post-traumatic stress (PTSD)".

Based on detailed evidence and research, Dart Europe notes, the NICE guidelines are expected



▲ Australasia's second Ochberg Fellow, ABC reporter Philip Williams, on assignment in the Middle East

"They will then participate in the three-day annual international conference of the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies before having an opportunity to network with their peers and experts in this area of growing interest," Ms McMahon said.

to have a profound impact – both in the UK and internationally – on how organisations and healthcare professionals respond to psychological trauma in the future. For more information and a link to the guidelines themselves, visit [www.dartcenter.org/articles/headlines/2005/2005\\_05\\_12.html](http://www.dartcenter.org/articles/headlines/2005/2005_05_12.html)

## ► Post-tsunami support

In the first weeks after the tsunami story broke, the Dart Centre – Australasia provided important information and support to newsrooms, drawing on Dart materials, their own research and useful online links. Many of these resources are still available online for future reference.

## ► It's been a decade since the Oklahoma bombings

Just over 10 years ago, on April 19, 1995, the US mid-west city of Oklahoma was rocked by a truck bomb which brought down a large part of a multi-storey federal government office block, killing 168 citizens, many of them infants attending the building's childcare centre.

Many more people were maimed by the explosion and the subsequent collapse of one of the buildings frontages seconds later (which you may have seen graphically re-enacted recently on the TV special *Seven Seconds From Disaster*).

It was a shocking story to witness and to cover. A team from the local daily newspaper, *The Daily Oklahoman*, headed by then reporter Joe Hight, won a national journalism award for its coverage of the bombing and its victims.

A decade later, the impact is still felt. Read a little of what Joe Hight, now managing editor at the paper, and his team learned about covering

Williams has recently returned to Australia from the ABC's London bureau where here covered British and European affairs, from the politics of Westminster to Britain's role in Europe and the Middle East.

From 1990 to 1993, Williams was Tokyo correspondent for the ABC, covering northern Asian countries. He has also been diplomatic and defence correspondent for ABC TV and a political reporter for its current affairs program the *7.30 Report*.

"When we looked at his body of work, it was clear Philip had demonstrated professionalism and sensitivity when covering many major events, locally and overseas," Ms McMahon noted.

"Apart from the very difficult terrorist and tsunami stories, he has covered the 1999 uprising in East Timor, French nuclear testing in the Pacific and the aftermath of several earthquakes, floods and volcanoes.

"This breadth of experience has exposed Philip to a considerable amount of on-the-job trauma, yet he continues to be able to complete such assignments with skill and dedication.

"Our panel of judges felt Philip has much to contribute to the wider community of Australasian journalists who are looking to build resilience and cope better with increasing demands to deliver traumatic news stories."

The inaugural Australasian Ochberg Fellow in 2004 was *Age* reporter Gary Tippet.

such a traumatic incident at both [www.dartcenter.org/articles/oped/2005\\_04\\_12.htm](http://www.dartcenter.org/articles/oped/2005_04_12.htm) and [www.notrain-nogain.org/train/res/reparc/disaster.asp](http://www.notrain-nogain.org/train/res/reparc/disaster.asp)

## SPECIAL NOTE:

In conjunction with the Australian Press Council and the University of Tasmania, Dart Australasia will welcome Joe Hight to Australia in the early 2006 to talk to journalists, students and others about covering such major incidents and some of the issues that arise around the observance and coverage of significant "anniversaries".

For further information about the visit, contact Cait McMahon, on [australasia@dartcentre.org](mailto:australasia@dartcentre.org) or 0419 131 947.

# Footnote • • •

Dart members around the world have helped raise awareness of important issues that complicate the reporting of traumatic incidents. They have helped promote a greater understanding of the impact of trauma on individuals and communities. They have fostered discussions about issues that concern the community, news media, medical and health practitioners, researchers, journalism students and others. They have also devised and delivered training for students and news personnel. A number are completing research projects – from postgraduate research to industry-sponsored studies and even national, grant-funded investigations – that are delivering important findings for all concerned. To learn more about these activities, visit [www.dartcenter.org](http://www.dartcenter.org)

# What's been happening in Australasia • • •

## ► Melbourne forum on February 24

The first of a national series of “post-tsunami forums” was organised by Dart Australasia’s Cait McMahon and chaired by inaugural Ochberg (Dart) Fellow, Gary Tippet. The forum examined the similarities and differences of “professional attendees” at a disaster site. Speakers included:

- **Farah Farouque**, *The Age*
- **Joyati Das**, World Vision Emergency Response Team
- **Rebecca Goddard**, Australian Federal Police’s Media Section

## ► Canberra forum on March 22

The “Trauma, Stress and Journalism” forum was subsequently held at the National Press Club. Organised by Associate Professor Kerry Green and chaired by Gary Tippet, the presenters were:

- **Michael Brissenden**, ABC journalist
- **Steve Levitt**, advisor to World Vision CEO Tim Costello
- **Rebecca Goddard**, Australian Federal Police’s Media Section

The Q&A session went particularly well and there was a lively discussion of how health professionals went about taking care of themselves while working in remote locations. It was noted that health professionals, unlike journalists, did not face “on-the-ground” competition and could usually readily access peer support or a hotline

support service if working alone. It may be worth investigating whether such a service could be made available for journalists.

## ► APJC videoconferences with tsunami journalists in March-April

John Wallace, director of the Asia Pacific Journalism Centre and board member of Dart Australasia, organised videoconference forums in March and April for senior editorial staff in countries affected by the Boxing Day 2004 tsunami. Around 40 took part in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Thailand and Malaysia, including several who had lost loved ones, work colleagues and/or homes and belongings. Dart Centre Australasia board member Associate Professor Kerry Green spoke on trauma and journalism. Other speakers focused on how to report the massive, ongoing relief and reconstruction effort. The APJC is online at [www.apjc.org.au](http://www.apjc.org.au)

## ► Sydney forum on April 6

The final forum on “trauma and journalism” coincided with the visit of Dart’s field director Bruce Shapiro, a well-known US journalist and educator. This forum was organised by Cait McMahon. Gary Tippet chaired and the presenters were:

- **Mark Colvin**, ABC journalist
- **Sharon Hill**, Nationwide News
- **Bruce Shapiro**, Dart US (a regular on Phillip Adams’ *Late Night Live* program on ABC Radio National)
- **Professor Beverly Raphael**, internationally renowned trauma and mental health expert

## ► Dart Australasia’s involvement in education

In late 2003, prior to the formation of the Dart Centre for Journalism and Trauma – Australasia, QUT lecturer Philip Castle was approached to join with the MEAA in a bid for a WorkCover grant to deliver basic training about dealing with traumatic news to journalists in that state. His Dart colleague Trina McLellan agreed to assist with this project. That grant eventually came through earlier this year. Phil and Trina delivered a session to a small group of photojournalists at the MEAA headquarter in Sydney in May, while Trina and another colleague, Roger Patching (Bond University), delivered a session at the MEAA’s National Freelance Conference in Newcastle in June while Phil was overseas. Dart Australasia director Cait McMahon has been delivered lectures for undergraduate and postgraduate students at Melbourne’s RMIT School of Journalism on journalism and trauma issues. Reception of Dart materials, resources and links was very positive in all sessions.

## ► Congratulations to Professor Green

Dart Australasia board member Kerry Green has recently accepted a position as Professor and Head of the School of Communication, Information and New Media at the University of South Australia, moving there from the University of Canberra mid-year.

# What's on the horizon • • •

## ► Perth forum on September 15

West Australian news media will discuss “Journalism and Trauma – Issues and Options” on Thursday, September 15, when the Dart Centre Australasia holds an evening forum at The Hyde Park Hotel in West Perth. Bookings essential. Email [australasia@dartcentre.org](mailto:australasia@dartcentre.org) or call 0419 131 947. (This event precedes the Australasian Society for Traumatic Stress Studies’ annual conference in Perth on September 16-17. Further details at [www.astss.org.au](http://www.astss.org.au))

## ► It's 30 years since journalists died in Balibo, East Timor

October 16, 2005, marks 30 years since five Australian television journalists — Seven’s Greg Shackleton, Gary Cunningham and Tony Stewart and Nine’s Brian Peters and Malcolm Rennie — were killed in a raid by Indonesia’s special forces in the East Timorese border town of Balibo. Their deaths touched many inside and outside newsrooms.

## ► Dart booklets online

Two of Dart’s most popular journalism and trauma support booklets are available online. *Tragedies and Journalists* is posted at [www.dartcenter.org/articles/books/tragedies.html](http://www.dartcenter.org/articles/books/tragedies.html) while an excellent standby resource for newsrooms, *Breaking Bad News* can be accessed at [www.dartcenter.org/articles/books/breaking\\_bad\\_news\\_00.html](http://www.dartcenter.org/articles/books/breaking_bad_news_00.html)

# Who we are • • •

In Australasia, the Dart Centre was founded in September, 2004. It is part of a global network of journalists, health professionals, researchers and educators who are working to encourage responsible coverage of traumatic events and to improve the interface between news media and those impacted by traumatic incidents.

The benefits of such efforts are: less immediate and long-term stress on news media personnel who cover such stories; a minimisation of further harm to victims, survivors, witnesses and their families and communities; and more sensitive and accurate reporting of tragedy and disaster. They do this by fostering discussions, designing and conducting research and training, providing useful information and links and by publishing personal accounts.

Internationally, the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma is based at the University of Washington, in Seattle, with affiliates in Australasia, Africa, Europe and Latin America. Its mission is documented at [www.dartcenter.org/about/mission.html](http://www.dartcenter.org/about/mission.html)

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