



# Dealing with traumatised staff

**Editor to editor**

Assistant editor of *The Shepparton News* Geoff Adams attended a full-day training session run by the Dart Centre Australasia for editors/managers and senior journalists in regional Victoria. The session was funded by Victoria's Department of Human Services. The training was facilitated by Gary Tippet of *The Age* and Cait McMahon, the director of Dart Australasia. This is what Geoff wrote several weeks after that session for other editors:

THE call came 15 minutes after arriving at the scene. The victims of this nasty head-on collision were prominent local people, so the remains I had just seen – and the wreckage scattered 200m down the highway – belonged to people I knew.

Rural journalists working in small communities live with the knowledge that when disaster strikes they are likely to have some connection with the victims. Rural towns and cities have a strength in a tangle of networks that is both comforting and challenging.

Your dentist might be on the board of the local hospital, your mechanic might be in the local Rotary club and the businessman serving you latte may well be the local councillor.

The closeness of rural life often creates ethical dilemmas and added pressure to get the story right. It is inescapable that one day you will be called on to report on the sudden death or injury of someone you know or have met.

With this knowledge and the growing need for more sophisticated responses to staff issues, *The News*, a regional daily newspaper at Shepparton in Victoria has developed a procedure which is designed to reduce the impact of trauma on our photographers and reporters.

Staff who attend a traumatic scene or deal with traumatised sources are invited to talk to their supervisor, usually within 24 hours of the event.

The staff member has an opportunity to describe their experience, talk about how they covered it and reflect on how they felt about it.

Where the supervisor believes it appropriate, the staff member is offered the number of a counsellor to contact who will provide a confidential, and initially free session, to debrief.

Our human resources manager is also available to anyone wanting to talk things over with someone at *The News*, and this person is at arm's length from the newsroom.

**by Geoff Adams**

## About the session attended

TRAINING facilitated by the Dart Centre skilled us in identifying symptoms of traumatic stress in ourselves and others. It taught us how to both self-care and to implement duty-of-care procedures for our staff in an effort to circumvent some of the difficulties mentioned above.

I found the workshop challenging and stimulating. It was refreshing to hear other industry professionals talking about similar issues that we have had to confront in rural areas.

For many years the trauma that journalists and photographers have to face has been avoided because too few people knew what to do. The Dart workshop has given us some tools to work through the issues in an open and frank way.

Gary Tippet was candid in sharing his industry experience and Cait McMahon's advice was helpful in creating our own policies about how we deal with people suffering trauma.



**Geoff Adams** is assistant editor of *The Shepparton News*, editor of the *Country News*, a board member of Goulburn Valley Family Care, a Scouting Australia district personnel committee member, and father of two.

About every 12 months a counsellor addresses the managers on how best to conduct these initial discussions. The procedure appears to work well and is generally accepted by staff, some of whom have said it gives them some sort of pressure relief valve and is a reminder that they are valued. Some of the difficulties with this approach can include:

- Over-zealous managers trying to become instant counsellors, reinforcing a perception that the experience was so bad they expect to be troubled;
- Managers talking instead of listening, or being too uncomfortable to handle the discussion; and
- Staff missing out because they opt not to talk about the effect of the traumatic event.

If staff members working in an open-plan office (which, in a newspaper office, is less than private) are asked "would you like to talk

about the fire/flood/accident", they sometimes say no. Perceptive managers simply arrange an appointment with the staff member without getting into a discussion about whether they want a chat.

This is the compulsory part of the exercise. If, once the two are in a discrete location, the staff member says they don't want to discuss it, then the two can talk about the weather or the footy scores and call it a day.

An offer is also usually made to talk about it another time or with someone else. Mostly, though, once staff are familiar with the process they seem prepared to talk about the event and, in most cases, it appears to be helpful.

I wish I had some glib answers on this topic for rural journalists, but we willingly choose to work in a profession which puts us in close contact with our readers, where we laugh at our eccentricities, rejoice when the footy club breaks a drought and weep with those who suffer.

## INSIDE THIS EDITION

Different country, similar issues . . . . .	page 3	A new face at the top . . . . .	page 2
Port Arthur anniversary stories . . . . .	pages 4-6	Introducing Jim Tully . . . . .	page 2
Important research . . . . .	page 7	Congratulations . . . . .	page 2
About the Ochberg Fellowship. . . . .	page 7	What's been happening.. . . . .	page 8
What is the Dart Society? . . . . .	page 7	What's on the horizon . . . . .	page 8

## New face at the top • • •



**A**FTER an extensive search and consideration of a good number of impressive applications, the international headquarters of the Dart Center at the University of Washington in Seattle has chosen its new executive director.

American freelance journalist and trauma survivor, **Bruce Shapiro**, left, who has been Field Director for the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma, was appointed to the role at the beginning of June, taking up the post from the retiring executive director, **Professor Roger Simpson**.

Shapiro is an award-winning political journalist and a National Magazine Award finalist.

He contributes a weekly report on American politics and culture to Australia's Radio National and has also been a contributing editor for the Nation magazine and also Salon.com's national correspondent.

Since 1994, Shapiro has taught investigative

journalism at Yale University. His most recent book is *Shaking the Foundations: 200 Years of Investigative Journalism in America* (Nation Books).

More details about Shapiro appear online at  
• [www.dartcenter.org/articles/headlines/2006/2006\\_06\\_01.html](http://www.dartcenter.org/articles/headlines/2006/2006_06_01.html)

• [www.dartcenter.org/about/personnel\\_shapiro.html](http://www.dartcenter.org/about/personnel_shapiro.html)

Dart Center president Joe Hight noted Shapiro's appointment would see the organisation "continue its ever-expanding global outreach" from its headquarters at the University of Washington as well as its centres in London and Melbourne.

"Bruce provides us with the experience, leadership and vision to take us far into the future," Hight said.

Professor Simpson, who is retiring to become the Dart Professor of Journalism and Trauma at the University of Washington will continue his valuable research work.

## Introducing • • •

**J**IM TULLY, right, is the newest board member of the Dart Centre Australasia and we welcome him from across the pond, where he is Head of School and Program Director, Journalism, in the School of Political Science and Communication at the University of Canterbury in Christchurch, New Zealand.

He holds a Master of Arts with Honours and a Graduate Diploma in Journalism and teaches undergraduate and postgraduate courses. He also researches in the areas of media ethics, science communication and foreign news.

Before moving into academia in 1987, Tully worked for 18 years in daily newspapers, becoming editorial manager and assistant editor of *The Auckland Star* and editor of weekend newspaper *8 O'Clock*.

While Pacific Affairs writer for *The Auckland Star* he was inaugural winner of the New Zealand Journalist of the Year Award for coverage of the Cook Islands election scandal. Later, as an



editorial executive he had delivered in-house training.

During his career, Tully has been a member of the Journalists' Training Board, chair of the

Auckland Institute of Technology's Journalism Advisory Committee, and a former president of the Northern Journalists' Union.

Tully has just been commissioned to write the new national journalism text by the industry organisation which oversees journalism training in New Zealand. He is also editing a book on risk communication.

Tully has been a UNESCO consultant on journalism in Western Samoa and the Cook Islands and has also been the New Zealand Vice Chancellors' Committee representative on the National Advisory Committee on Media Studies.

He frequently appears as a media commentator and has published widely.

Recently Tully has been integral in a roundtable discussion involving industry and government representatives that has been examining the best ways for media to report issues around suicide.

## Congratulations • • •

**G**ARY Tippet, an *Age* journalist and Australasia's inaugural Ochberg Fellow – who is now a member of Dart Australasia's executive team – recently won two prestigious awards for his reporting work.

The first, a Quill award for 'April's Story', is an investigative feature about a car crash survivor who suffered horrific head injuries. Judges wrote of the piece: "This is a beautifully written and deeply moving account of a young woman's survival of a car accident in which she suffered horrifying and usually fatal head injuries. Tippet takes us on

a journey. It presents a number of ethical issues, which Tippet appears to have resolved with sensitivity ... high-quality journalism."

Lest you think reporting a deeply traumatic story is about going soft on subjects, take a look at 'April's Story' – including photographs by Angela Wylie – which can be accessed online at [www.theage.com.au/news/National/Aprils-story/2005/01/22/1106334261566.html](http://www.theage.com.au/news/National/Aprils-story/2005/01/22/1106334261566.html)

Another piece — 'Death of a Sportsman' written with Peter Gregory — won the Victorian Law Foundation's prestigious Legal Reporting award.



► *Inaugural Ochberg Fellow Gary Tippet*

### ► Interesting, useful websites

[www.dartcenter.org/dartaward/best\\_practices/da\\_best\\_practices.pdf](http://www.dartcenter.org/dartaward/best_practices/da_best_practices.pdf)  
downloadable report on best practices in trauma reporting

[www.trauma-pages.com](http://www.trauma-pages.com)  
David Baldwin's excellent trauma information pages

[www.trauma-pages.com/disaster.php](http://www.trauma-pages.com/disaster.php)  
specific information on disaster situations

[www.lightstalkers.org](http://www.lightstalkers.org)  
a discussion place for photographers

## Different country, similar issues • • •



**S**IGNIFICANT stories of violence and tragedy experienced by journalists in the course of their work were shared by 17 Indonesian journalists who, in late in 2005, participated in the Indonesia-Australia Specialised Training Project (IASTP III) course conducted in Melbourne, Australia.

From events of civil unrest and political upheaval to the impact of covering a myriad of natural disasters in their region, these journalists had done it all. These events, they acknowledged, would often induce high levels of distress and trauma among news staff. Some newsrooms were staffed by personnel who had all been traumatised at one point.

Personal experiences of danger and traumatic stress, such as that of participant Peter Tukan, a journalist with Antara's Atambua office, were still raw years later (see sidebar piece).

The Dart Centre Australasia was involved in training the 18 print media/wire service journalists in skills dealing with trauma experienced in the course of reporting stories such as the one described by Tukan, but also the "everyday reporting" of car accidents and criminal violence.

Many participants said they experienced difficulty researching, writing and reporting stories of trauma while they themselves were often victims of the tragedy. A number spoke of being exiled, shot at, having their own and their families lives threatened. One spoke of reporting on a landslide and watching a mother and child being swept away in the wash of mud as the mother breastfed her baby. This event remains a nightmare and produces intrusive images for this journalist.

The experienced journalists – a number from

areas experiencing high conflict – were chosen to be part of the IASTP III Course (a bilateral project, part of the Australian Government's AusAID development co-operation program with Indonesia).

Delivered through RMIT International (RMIT University's international arm, accessible online at [www.rmit.edu.au/international](http://www.rmit.edu.au/international)) which facilitated the full three months of the journalists' training program. The journalism and trauma module – facilitated by the Dart Centre Australasia – ran for nearly three weeks of their 12-week program. It was a hands-on learning program that involved talking to other journalists, sharing experiences and developing skills to build resilience.

The Dart Centre trauma component was facilitated by Professor Kerry Green (Head, School of Communication, Information and New Media University of South Australia), Associate Professor Stephen Tanner (Head, School of Journalism & Creative Writing, University of Wollongong), Trina McLellan, researcher and sub-editor, The Courier-Mail and Cait McMahon, psychologist and trauma specialist.

According to each of the Dart facilitators, the project presented a unique opportunity for Dart Australasia to combine its specialised skills with a university's development journalism program.

It also underscored the value of involving journalists from their own countries in the development of future training.

To that end, in recent weeks the Dart Centre Australasia has begun a train-the-trainer program with select editorial leaders to help Indonesia roll out its own journalism and trauma training to its newsrooms over the coming years.

► The IASTP III cohort with special visitor former South-East Asian correspondent with *The Australian*, Kimina Lyall (centre), and Dart trainers Cait McMahon (right, front) and Trina McLellan (right, rear).

### On the frontline in East Timor

**O**N September 6, 2000, three staff from the UNHCR delegation's office in Atambua were killed by a group of pro-integration East Timor refugees.

After they killed them, the corpses were burned in the office's courtyard. I witnessed the militia savagely burning the victims' remains.

Some staff at the UNHCR office were forced to run and hide in the safe house of Atambua Bishop Mgr Anton Pain Ratu, SVD, which was about 600m from the office building.

One of the militiamen suddenly spotted me and pointed his gun angrily, stopping me as I was making my way from the Bishop's safe house to the UNHCR building, which was now on fire.

The gunman threatened to kill me if I didn't tell him where the Malaysian head of the UNHCR delegation was.

► Read Tukan's full report online at [www.dartcenter.org/articles/personal\\_stories/tukan\\_peter.html](http://www.dartcenter.org/articles/personal_stories/tukan_peter.html)

# Ten years on we're still living the past • • •

A decade after the Port Arthur massacre, this tragedy is still making headlines.

Emma Mulholland asks those connected to this event how they feel their stories are being told today.



FOR more than a century tourists have come to Port Arthur Historic Site to squat in convict cells and marvel at Port Arthur's stark, often harsh history. Its dark, distant past may prove a fascinating place to explore but recent forums hosted by the Dart Centre for Journalism & Trauma have suggested to journalists that those connected to Port Arthur are often not as keen to keep revisiting a more recent horror – the shooting massacre of April 28, 1996.

It's 10 years since Martin Bryant visited the historic site one Sunday afternoon, sat down to a plate of trevally and peas and then randomly began shooting, eventually murdering 35 people.

At the time there was an avalanche of media attention. But, while the site itself shut its doors for a short while afterwards, visitor numbers have steadily grown ever since, restoring the region to the state's major drawcard for visitors.

For many living there, or elsewhere, the massacre has never really had a chance to become a part of the past. Its overwhelming horror is dredged up in different ways, by curious but insensitive tourists, by other tragic events that reopen old wounds.

From time to time, media will revisit the shocking details of what happened in an almost

impossible quest for answers to why this massacre occurred at all.

In a public forum held at the University of Technology, Sydney, the president of the US Dart Centre, Joe Hight, reminded journalists that this year's anniversary coverage needed to focus on Port Arthur as it was in 2006 and what was real for people now: "Tell the news of what happened today. Historians will tell you what happened 10 years ago."

Hight speaks from experience. As managing editor of *The Oklahoman*, he knows how difficult it is to report on tragedy. After the 1995 Oklahoma bombing, he led a team of award-winning reporters who covered the fallout from the domestic terrorism act which killed 168 people and changed forever the people who call Oklahoma City home.

"For all the idealistic things we've said about getting the news out, you must remember the sort of effect this has on people," Hight reminded journalists.

On behalf of the Dart Centre Australasia – which itself is part of an international organisation which teaches journalists how to deal constructively with traumatic events –

Hight travelled to Hobart and Port Arthur in mid-March to meet journalists and locals and foster a conversation between the two about how major incidents and anniversaries can be reported while minimising further harm to all concerned.

He then visited Brisbane and Sydney to share his observations as well as the wisdom of those he met in Tasmania before he flew back to the US.

Just weeks after his visit, the first 10th anniversary stories began to appear across Australia but, in some instances, it hardly seemed like media outlets had taken on board what the Port Arthur community and he had to say. Other media outlets chose a less sensational approach and won the admiration of those who were critical of their less respectful peers.

The first major piece was published by *The Bulletin* after several months of interviews and research. But Port Arthur Historic Site CEO Stephen Large was shocked by what was eventually published, a story that focused heavily on Bryant and a rehashing of events from 10 years ago. Large agreed to be interviewed for *The Bulletin's* article assuming it would focus on how his organisation had rebuilt itself but, instead, the article was yet another graphic account of the massacre.

"You've got to understand that, for a person who works down here, who lives down here, it's very difficult revisiting that stuff," Large said afterwards.

"It has a significant effect on everyone."

Gaye Wright – who publishes Port Arthur's monthly local newsletter, *The Tasman Gazette* – said she was appalled at the coverage by Tasmania's major daily newspaper, *The Mercury*. Against suggestions distributed to Australian media by the Australian Press Council, *The Mercury* ran an image of Bryant on its front page: "That's what everyone woke up to with their breakfasts, his angelic face. That made me really, really angry. The media can be extremely callous."

Having spoken to Dart Centre members some months earlier, Wright decided her newsletter's coverage of the anniversary would be subdued.

"Certainly Martin Bryant will never get mentioned in this paper," she said.

Leslie Kirby is a woman frequently interrupted by her own enormous laugh, so it is difficult to imagine she has spent the past decade trying to escape what Bryant did to her community. At the time of the massacre, she was working as the commercial operations manager at Port Arthur Historic Site. Her husband was caught in the midst of the action and she lost friends and three staff members.

Kirby was also angered by *The Mercury's* front page: "It was offensive and personally very distressing." For Kirby, the story of Martin Bryant is over. "He's in jail, that's it. Over and done with. I don't care if he's put on weight or if he's suicidal. I really don't care."

Hight says that the public does deserve to learn about where Bryant is today but, he says, not to the exclusion of more important stories about survivors.

His colleague, Australasian director of the Dart Centre Cait McMahon, acknowledges people connected with the Port Arthur massacre often do not want to see Bryant's photo or even hear his name. She doesn't think Bryant offers much of a story anyway: "I think people want to know if he has admitted to why he did it, or if he has tried to better himself. But he hasn't apparently."

Ironically, the very history that makes Port Arthur so attractive to growing numbers of tourists may linger but its own young people don't seem keen to stay. Wright worries negative, distressing media coverage is helping to chase them away.

The local Tasman Peninsula high school only goes to Year 10 (students must move to Hobart if they want to continue their schooling). This, Wright says, sees many students leave the region as soon as they finish Year 10. But few are coming back. "It's like there's a stigma here. They just want to go away."

Her 13-year-old daughter was only three when the massacre happened but Wright worries she will leave Port Arthur as soon as she's old enough. "It's like it's just history this place. No-one inhabits it. It's an attraction. But it happened in a town, in a community."

\* Emma Mulholland is a student journalist from the University of Technology, Sydney.



CONFRONTING the challenges of reporting anniversaries ... *above, clockwise from top*, a memorial plaque at Port Arthur, Aileen Kingston, Peter Roche, Garry Bailey and Joe Hight at the Hobart forum; *below*, journalism students at the QUT lecture; and *opposite*, a moment of quiet reflection in the memorial garden at Port Arthur.



# Special challenges of reporting anniversaries • • •

WHILE humans tend to mark the anniversary of both joyful and difficult events in their lives, individuals and communities who have been exposed to severe trauma often find news media want to acknowledge those anniversaries as well, sometimes replaying painful details or awakening long-buried memories.

Such coverage can be respectful, constructive and forward-looking or it can be wantonly distressing, destructive and backward-focused according to those touched by the Port Arthur massacre.

In the weeks running up to the 10th anniversary of the shooting deaths of 35 innocents, the Dart Centre Australasia – in conjunction with the Australian Press Council – sought to foster a number of conversations about reporting anniversaries, beginning in Tasmania.

Who better to attempt to bridge the gap between a still-bruised community and a somewhat wary news media than the US president of the Dart Center and managing editor of *The Oklahoman*, Joe Hight? Hight not only oversaw the original award-winning news team that covered the Oklahoma Bombing in 1995, but also oversaw the sensitive, informative anniversary coverage of that atrocity's 10th anniversary in 2005.

The public, news media personnel, health professionals, researchers and students quickly joined the conversations that grew out of interviews, visits, lectures, forums and workplace meetings in Hobart, Brisbane and Sydney. Hight was given a warm welcome wherever he went, including a special private visit to the Port Arthur site itself.

National media – *The Australian's* Media section and ABC Radio National's *Media Report* – were quick to pick up on the importance of issues that arise when reporting anniversaries. State media covered Hight's visit as well as key points about the Port Arthur anniversary in particular.

Not only in the eastern states but well beyond, discussions ranged from the nature of trauma and the need for respect of victims and survivors to editorial and ethical decisions faced at times of significant events and anniversaries as well as matters like achieving balance, the use of language and even the freedom of the press.

But the most powerful messages for Australia's media came from a public forum held in Hobart on March 17 – its panel consisted of Hight, two community members, ferry boat captain Peter Roche and former toll booth operator Aileen Kingston, *The Mercury's* editor Garry Bailey and counselling psychologist Ann Stark – that was facilitated by respected Tasmanian broadcast journalist Judy Tierney.

When it comes to reporting traumatic incidents and their anniversaries, Hight acknowledged the need to change the culture of journalism, to create the "modern journalist" who is respectful and sensitive to victims and who knows how to take care of him or herself.

Hight urged journalists to hold themselves to the highest of standards at these moments rather than



lower them for the sake of being first and to look beyond statistics to the human side of tragedies.

Roche spoke eloquently about the realities faced by those in the media's bright spotlight, acknowledging the media's need to tell stories about tragedy. But he urged journalists to "take a step back" and think how the story should be told, especially think how it will impact on people.

He also warned them to look beyond obvious, superficial and sometimes predictable coverage to deeper stories that can remain untold and the social consequences of that. Roche said some in Australia's media seem to be trapped on the negative aspects and less willing to publish positive stories and stories of recovery.

"Talk about how we have moved on – how people's lives will never be the same, but we have moved on," he implored the media present at the forum. "The media need to better understand when they report on a story they impact on others people's wellbeing, on their humanity."

A quietly spoken Kingston described how victim's lives are dramatically changed forever following a tragedy, explaining that the biggest losses were the loss of identity, trust and control, all of which can be compounded by media and other agencies like police.

Kingston described how, in the days after her rescue from a cupboard where she had sought shelter from a hail of bullets, she received a phone call from a journalist threatening to come to her home "because we know where you live". After the trauma she had experienced, Kingston was terrified by that remark, feeling she had to flee her home.

"Had the media approached me in a sensitive and respectful way I may have considered speaking to them. They would have got a good story and I would have not gone through the experience of feeling terrified in my own home."

In the intervening years, Kingston said, she had seen "the best and worst of the media". As a consequence, she would urge news media outlets to keep three things in mind – the need for accuracy, the need to respect people and their privacy and not pressure them, and the need to resist repeatedly

asking people to recall events or revisit scenes of violence: "... people are feeling very, very vulnerable and have trouble coping with everyday life, let alone what you want them to do or say."

Stark pointed to the parallels between journalism and therapy after a traumatic incident, noting that both are about narratives and giving meaning to incidents. She said that retelling a story when a person doesn't feel they want to can be re-traumatising, so pushing someone for an interview when they don't really want to be interviewed could be harmful to their recovery.

After traumatic events, she noted, too much graphic detail or gratuitous information can be made available and it is easily accessed by children. This, she noted, could be especially harmful. But, she urged journalists, not to overlook the potential effects of doing such reporting. She urged newsrooms to adopt peer support mechanisms as an important aspect of care.

Closing the forum, the Australian Press Council's Professor H.P. Lee, *left*, acknowledged there was still a lot of public interest in the issue of how to report on Port Arthur and on disaster in general.

While it was important not to forget the tragedy of Port Arthur, he said, communication between the media and affected communities should be encouraged. "It is the role of management to ensure staff treat interviewees ethically and with respect to privacy," he said.

\* After Joe Hight's visits to Australian east coast capitals, the Dart Centre Australia decided it would monitor media coverage of the 10th anniversary of the Port Arthur. As a non-profit organisation with limited resources, the board of the Dart Centre Australasia appreciates the discount rate offered by Rehame for this service throughout that period.

## Feedback

News Ltd's national editorial training manager, Sharon Hill, attended a number of the activities during Hight's visits, both in Tasmania and in New South Wales. After an in-house session with News Ltd staff in Sydney, Hill wrote:

"Aside from improving understanding among our most influential journalists about the reporting of trauma, the practical outcome of this session is that a number of newspapers are now reviewing their plans for the anniversary coverage."

"In particular, they are reconsidering the use and treatment of photographs taken at the time of the shooting and reviewing how they will approach witnesses, survivors and victims' families."

"My expectation is that the resulting coverage will be better than it would otherwise have been — for readers, journalists and all affected by what happened at Port Arthur."

\* Special note: Thanks need to be extended to the Australian Press Council for its sponsorship of this project and, more specifically, to Sharon Hill, Cheryl Attenborough and Sandy Symons (UTS) who saw that specific activities came to fruition. Significant thanks also go to Nicola Goc from UTAS, Dr Leo Bowman and Philip Castle from QUT, as well as Greg Chamberlin from Queensland Newspapers. Finally, the Dart Centre Australasia's Trina McLellan contributed a significant amount of time and energy to this project from beginning to end. Her time was volunteered and given generously.

# About the Dart Centre's Ochberg Fellowship • • •

In 2005, Phillip Williams was awarded Australasia's Ochberg Fellowship in recognition of his outstanding contribution to journalism in the face of trauma. As a part of that prestigious fellowship, Williams spent five days in Toronto, alongside eight other winners from other countries, at a seminar about the role emotional trauma plays in the coverage of violent events. Williams speaks to Katie Splevins\* about his experience of the fellowship.

## How did you become an Ochberg Fellow?

Since April last year I have been working as a presenter and reporter for ABC's *Stateline*, based in Canberra. Before this, I worked for four and a half years as a TV correspondent for the ABC in London. I covered the tragedies of the Beslan massacre, the Madrid bombings, the attacks of 9/11 and Iraq – all issues of trauma and terrorism. The ABC thought that the firsthand experience I had of trauma and journalism made me a good candidate for the Ochberg fellowship. It was also a chance to learn more in this area with the possibility of bringing new ideas to the ABC which could influence the way the organisation works.

## What did you learn from your time in Toronto?

It was an incredible opportunity to exchange ideas with people of different backgrounds. We were newspaper reporters from the US, columnists of tiny small-town publications, British Newspaper reporters, German reporters and, between us all, we stunned each other with what we have had to cover. It was intriguing to hear how we all did it. There was so much information and so many ideas and we were all so excited by it that we decided to stick together at every opportunity – the topic was fascinating – I think we all learned a great deal.

I was so impressed by the level of determination and care for victims of trauma, and the degree to which reporters had gone to establish trust and create a relationship based on trust. They cared for survivors in the exact way you would wish to be cared for in the same situation. One story I heard was about a reporter who had covered a story about a rape victim, obviously traumatised, and living in a tiny town in the US. The perpetrator was convicted but the rapist was the son of a well-known and influential family who had convinced the whole town to side against her. The town believed that she had asked for it and should leave the area. This reporter spent months with the victim and eventually published a story which literally turned the views of the townspeople around. The girl could now stay and hold her head high when she walked down the street. That is just one small example of many.

## You also had access to the International Society for Trauma and Stress Studies (via its annual conference). What did you learn there?

It is very rare that you have the opportunity to meet victims of trauma and torture, let alone someone who is able to talk about that experience and then the trauma of reporting that torture. The Royal Marines gave a talk about a model of self care they use within their organisation and I hope to pick up



ON the job ... ABC TV's Phil Williams on assignment in Baghdad.

some of these elements and use them to broad and practical effect myself and within my organisation.

## How are you going carry what you have learned forward?

Hopefully, I can apply the things I have learned with the Dart Centre and bring training to the ABC at a practical and direct level. An ABC committee group – myself, Cait McMahon, the Director of Dart, and Dart training people – are going to instigate a program at the ABC. At the moment, we only provide referrals to outside organisations. Hopefully, we can work towards looking after those returning from traumatic issues ourselves. We are starting the training at management level, then moving down the ranks to journalists and reporters and, eventually, the whole organisation. We want to implement in-house management of self-care.

## If there is one thing you would like to share with other journalists what would it be?

It's vital journalists have access to mental health information. The days of "macho men" returning from a war zone, pretending to be unaffected, are over. It's inhuman not to be affected. I have learned to trust colleagues and reach out if I feel the need, seek advice without being self-conscious and feel comfortable expressing distress and trauma. Older journalists like me can send a message to younger ones that it is OK to feel traumatised and you can learn how to best look after yourself. I think it's especially relevant to men, older men, who don't express themselves. The Dart centre plays an important part in changing that culture.

\*Katie Splevins, an English journalist and psychologist, has been living in Sydney. In August 2006, Katie returns to England to begin doctoral studies, hopefully in the area of journalism and trauma.

## What is a Dart Ochberg Fellowship?

REPORTING responsibly and credibly on violent or traumatic events — crime, family violence, natural disasters and accidents, war or genocide — is one of the greatest challenges facing contemporary journalism.

The Dart Centre Ochberg Fellowship has been established by the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies and the Dart Centre in order to build a cohort of journalists better prepared for this challenge.

Australasia's Dart Centre for Journalism and Trauma provides one fellowship to a mid-career journalist who wants to apply knowledge of emotional trauma to improving coverage of violent events. This includes an expenses-paid trip to the United States.

Fellowships are open to print and broadcast reporters, photographers, editors and producers with at least five years of journalism experience.

The Australasian Fellow will join six or more European and American journalists for a two-day seminar on the role emotional trauma plays in coverage of violent events. The Fellows then have access to all events and speakers in the annual conference of the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (istss.org).

This fellowship is named after Dr Frank Ochberg, the Dart Center's chair emeritus and one of its founders. Nearly three decades ago Dr Ochberg, as a member of the American Psychiatric Association was part of the group of early pioneers who defined individual reactions to traumatic stressors.

Australasia has two Dart Ochberg Fellows to date, *Age* senior reporter Gary Tippet and ABC TV senior reporter Philip Williams, with a third due to join the group later this year when the 2006 Ochberg Fellow is chosen.

If you know someone who demonstrates the highest standards and principles when covering trauma, encourage them to apply for consideration for this fellowship, which closes in mid-July each year. Specific details about the fellowship are available from Dart director Cait McMahon via email on [australasia@dartcentre.org](mailto:australasia@dartcentre.org) or by calling 0419 131 947.

## Reporting crime?

AS YDNEY-based researcher is examining how reporting crime may alter journalists' perceptions and behaviours. Registered psychologist and University of Western Sydney postgraduate researcher **Bev Chidgey** is specifically looking at how journalists reporting crime perceive the risks they face as well as their levels of resilience.

Chidgey needs volunteer participants from around Australia who have been crime reporters and who can spare about 30 minutes to answer a standard set of questions via email. Data collected would be both anonymous and confidential in order to protect participants' privacy.

Her study is being carried out under the supervision of David Mutton of the University of Western Sydney's School of Psychology. For further information, contact Bev Chidgey via email at [chid@ozemail.com.au](mailto:chid@ozemail.com.au) or call 0405 102 435.

# What's been happening in Australasia

Dart Centre Australasia personnel have participated in a number of seminars, conferences, focus groups, training sessions and public panels run either by or in conjunction with other organisations that have addressed issues that impact on journalists who cover traumatic news.

## ► Perth, September 2005

DART conducted a forum for West Australian journalists alongside the annual Australian Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ASTSS) conference held in Perth. Mark Readings from Channel 9 and Andrew O'Connor of Western Australia's ABC spoke about their experiences as "in-the-field" journalists confronted by traumatic situations.

## ► Sydney, October 2005



CAIT McMahon joined Prime Minister John Howard, SBS Managing Director Nigel Milan, Telstra Countrywide's Doug Campbell, *Weekend Australian Magazine* editor Bruce Guthrie and others on a special panel run by the Country Press Association of New South Wales late last year speaking about the impact of trauma on country news organisations. Afterwards, Cait got to bend the PM's ear on the issue of trauma and journalism before rejoining the rest of an interesting one-day conference held at NSW's Parliament House in Sydney.

## ► Melbourne, December, 2005

TRINA McLellan, Professor Kerry Green, Cait McMahon and associate Dr Steve Tanner trained 17 Indonesian journalists in the area of journalism, trauma and conflict reporting

## 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

over an intensive 2½ weeks as part of RMIT International's IASTP Program funded by AusAid (see article).

## ► Eastern states, March, 2006

DART — in conjunction with the Australian Press Council and the University of Tasmania — organised several activities highlighting responsible reporting of significant anniversaries such as Port Arthur massacre's 10th anniversary (see article).

## ► Sydney, May, 2006

IN mid-2006, along with Ochberg fellow Phil Williams, Cait McMahon was part of focus groups run within the Australian Broadcasting Corporation ahead of the development of the ABC's in-house journalism and trauma training program.

## ► DHS pilot training, 2006



VICTORIA'S Department of Human Services engaged the Dart Centre Australasia to run a training pilot for journalists and their management in metropolitan and regional Victoria. The program began in February and has continued successfully throughout the first half of 2006. Feedback has been strongly positive and DHS has indicated it would like to expand the program.

## ► Brisbane, July, 2006

IN a riveting forum on reporting disasters on-shore and off-shore organised by the Media and Entertainment Arts Alliance, Phil Williams spoke alongside *Courier-Mail* photographer Rob MacColl, ABC TV journalist/presenter Lisa Millar and TEN Network reporter Max Futcher.

## ► Melbourne, July, 2006

GARY Tippet, Dart Australia's inaugural Ochberg Fellow, spoke from the heart at the Department of Human Services' Emergency Response sector conference about "A journalist's perspective of emergencies". Tippet and Cait McMahon then facilitated a post-conference workshop for attendees on journalists and emergency services who attend critical incidents.

and communities; and more sensitive and accurate reporting of tragedy and disaster. The Dart Centre does 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, Europe. Its mission is documented at [www.dartcenter.org/about/mission.html](http://www.dartcenter.org/about/mission.html)

# What's on the horizon

## ► Melbourne, August 3

CURRENT Ochberg Fellow Phil Williams, along with Fairfax's training editor Colin McKinnon and Cait McMahon, will be presenting a panel at the upcoming Critical Incident Stress Management Foundation of Australia Conference. The CISMFA panel "Journalists are people too" will focus on training for journalists on the issue of workplace trauma exposure. (Conference details at [www.cismfa.org.au/conferences/CISMFA8pps.pdf](http://www.cismfa.org.au/conferences/CISMFA8pps.pdf))

## ► Adelaide, September 18

THIS year's Australian Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ASTSS) conference is being held in Adelaide. One of the conference's themes will be "Journalists and Trauma". Dart Australasia is also organising a special workshop for journalists to coincide with the conference. Respected international journalism and trauma researcher Elana Newman will be a guest speaker at the conference and will facilitate the September 18 workshop for journalists with Dart executive member and University of South Australia Professor Kerry Green. The workshop will be held at the University of South Australia. For details, contact the Dart Centre on 0419 131 947.

## ► Brisbane, September 25

DART Centre Australasia's Cait McMahon, Trina McLellan and Phil Williams will host a workshop on developing resilience for covering traumatic stories on Monday evening, September 25, 2006. The hands-on workshop will be suitable for new, mid-career and senior journalists and managers. For details, contact Trina McLellan on [t.mclellan@bigpond.com.au](mailto:t.mclellan@bigpond.com.au) or call 0402 338 311.

## ► Sydney, Melbourne

FORUMS are also being planned for Sydney and Melbourne later in the year. Details will be publicised closer to the time on the Dart website ([www.dartcentre.org](http://www.dartcentre.org))

## Your Dart Centre Australasia contacts • • •

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