

# University antiques fair offers a brush with the past

*DOG-EARED bears, rare French antique dolls with porcelain skin, aged biscuit barrels and telescopes filled the atmospheric Great Hall at Sydney University on Sunday.*

*Inner-west residents flocked to the 13th Chancellor's Committee antique fair in the hope of finding a bargain or just to marvel at the history contained inside.*

*More than 20 antique dealers laid out their wares, which included maps, handbags, toys, tools and furniture spanning many decades.*

*Some brought along their family heirlooms for experts to cast their eyes over. Background music added to the rarefied atmosphere with singing from the university choir and piano and organ playing.*

*The committee is the university's voluntary fundraising group which raises money for projects such as the university's Koori Centre and restoring heritage buildings.*



## Aussie forests are best carbon busters

Australian forests are the world's best at storing carbon, a key weapon against climate change, researchers say.

The Australian National University scientists measured 132 forests around the planet and found that mountain ash forests in Victoria's Central Highlands were the most carbon-dense of all.

All trees absorb carbon dioxide and store it as they grow, but some forests lock up more carbon than others.

Carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere is one of the main causes of climate change.

Victoria's forests were so rich in carbon because they lived in a cool climate, which slowed down the decay of the trees, the researchers said.

The trees were very old - up to 350 years of age - which meant they grew heavy, dense wood, and the forests had not been logged.

Researcher Brendan Mackey said it had been thought that tropical forests were the richest in carbon.

"This is a real surprise because most people think tropical forests store the most carbon, but instead its forests in the temperate region that have the most," Prof Mackey said.

The research is published this week in the US-based Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

## Now eight schools in NSW put on swine flu alert

*EIGHT Sydney schools have been put on swine flu alert as the number of diagnosed cases surges to 227 across NSW.*

Sixty year 7 boarders at The King's School in Parramatta are in isolation and 110 year 7 day students have been told to stay home today after a mother of one of the boarders advised the school at the weekend that she had been diagnosed with swine flu.

The woman lives overseas but spent time with her son at the school last week before returning home. Her son had developed flu-like symptoms over the weekend and a swab has been sent for laboratory testing. The results are due today.

The headmaster, Tim Hawkes,

The other schools affected are

- St Margaret Mary's School in Merrylands,
- Bethel Christian Academy in Mount Druitt,
- Westfields Sports High School in Fairfield,
- Botany Public School, Marsden High School,
- JJ Cahill Memorial High School in Mascot,
- Marist Brothers in Pagewood and
- Dubbo Christian School.

said: "The school has taken immediate steps to isolate those students with whom the boy would have had the most contact and those are the year 7 students in general and boarders in particular."

Students with "cold symptoms and sniffles" were being tested. The results might be available last night, Dr Hawkes said.

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None of the schools has been closed, but those affected are being told to stay home.

The numbers of cases nationwide has risen to 1542, but no cases of community transmission have been recorded in NSW. In NSW 54 cases have been associated with the cruise ship Pacific Dawn, 29 people contracted the virus overseas, 68 contracted it interstate and 52 cases have been identified as a result of contact with a confirmed case. Another 24 cases of suspected swine flu are being investigated.

In the past week more than 460 people with influenza-related illness have gone to hospital emergency departments, compared with 30 for the same time period last year, the NSW chief health officer, Kerry Chant, said yesterday.

"We remain particularly concerned about people who are at greater risk of developing complications. This includes pregnant women and people with conditions like diabetes, heart or lung disease."

NSW Health has advised anyone with flu-like symptoms to go to hospital or phone their GP's office before arriving. But one inner-city GP, who did not want to be identified, told the Herald he had received mixed messages and was concerned that his immuno-compromised patients, such as those with HIV, hepatitis C and the elderly, were being exposed to potential swine flu victims.

He said his surgery had been unable to buy protective masks, and requests to obtain them from the national stockpile had been refused.

"We are not set up to be an infectious diseases clinic. If they want us to see these patients, then give us the tools to do so and provide protective equipment for our staff and patients."

## New deal boosts mango, citrus industry

More Australian mangoes will be exported to China under a new deal struck between both nations. China has agreed to a revised quarantine protocol which means growers will have more options in monitoring their orchards for signs of pests.

Under previous quarantine regulations, Australian growers had to prove their orchards were free of seed weevils and fruit fly, limiting exports to China since 2007.

Agriculture Minister Tony Burke said the changes would mean a boost for agriculture and jobs during the global recession. "These improved quarantine conditions could see a boost in trade worth millions of dollars to our mango growers," Mr Burke said in a statement. The changes also showed the trial consignments of mangoes sent to China in 2007 were well received, he said. Australian Mango Industry Association chairman Peter Delis said the new regulations put an end to cutting thousands of mangoes to check for weevils. "We expect volumes to dramatically increase with a longer supply window throughout the season," he said. The nation's mango industry was worth about \$100 million to the economy in 2008.

There will also be improved market access to China for Australia's citrus growers. Previously, containers of oranges, mandarins, lemons and grapefruit were only accepted into China's northern ports and had to undergo cold treatment to kill bugs in a method that could affect the quality of the fruit.

Australian authorities have since negotiated to increase the temperature for the cold treatment. Chinese authorities have also agreed to accept other Australian citrus fruits, including limes and tangelos.