

The Canberra Times

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Elements for success

Two Canberra students will be focused intently on high-level problems when they represent Australia at the International Science Olympiad. Modifications to the event mean the pair will miss out on overseas trips to compete, but Alexandra Vickery of Narrabundah College and James Monro of Canberra Grammar School have juggled senior studies, extra-curricular activities and science camps to put their minds to the test ahead of their next hurdle.

FULL STORY: PAGE 4

Canberra students Alexandra Vickery and James Monro will represent Australia at the International Science Olympiad. Picture: Dion Georgopoulos

Consent law revamp

Lucy Bladen

THERE will be a renewed push to strengthen the ACT's consent laws with a bill to be presented to the territory's parliament this week.

Labor backbencher Dr Marisa Paterson will put forward an amendment to the Crimes Act, which would seek to clearly define what consent is and is not.

Under the proposed

changes, seen by *The Canberra Times*, a statutory definition of consent would be introduced that is based on free and voluntary agreement. It would also make clear that a person can withdraw consent at any time of a sexual act.

It would introduce a positive definition of consent that is based on people communicating agreement of consent, essentially a yes

means yes model rather than no means no.

Dr Paterson said it would shift current legislation from the point of sexual assault being a violent act to a more "nuanced and defined" set of parameters around what consent is and is not.

"I'm proposing to introduce a communicative model of consent whereby the principle, meaning and definition of consent has

shifted - from something that is presumed and can be negated, to consent being something that must be given," she said.

The proposed bill amendment would also set out circumstances where consent is not given, these include cases where a person does not say or do something to resist the act or cases where a person may have consented to another

act with the same person.

A new test for the prosecution of an accused person would also be introduced in which their belief that consent was given must be deemed to be reasonable in the circumstances.

In cases where an accused does nothing to ascertain a person's consent, they would not be able to rely on a defence that they had believed the other person

had consented.

Dr Paterson said the proposed changes would bring ACT in line with other jurisdictions such as Tasmania and Victoria.

"This is a significant step forward for our community and I hope it is seen as an empowering moment for all those survivors of sexual violence in our community," she said.

Continued Page 6

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NEWS

EDUCATION International Science Olympiad modified for the COVID-19 era

ACT teens to compete against the world

Sarah Lansdown

TWO Canberra students will push their science knowledge to the limit when they represent Australia at the International Science Olympiad.

James Monro of Canberra Grammar School will be competing in the physics competition while Narabundah College student Alexandra Vickery will be joining the earth sciences team.

The year 12 students have managed to find time amid their regular studies and extra-curricular activities to immerse themselves in high-level science problems in preparation for the

competition.

The pair attended camps in January this year with 30 of the top minds from around Australia and got a crash course in the senior science curriculum.

They made it through to the next camp with only 10 students in April and shortly after that got the news that they had been selected to represent Australia at the international level.

In the physics Olympiad, James will face two five-hour tests, comprising a challenging theory paper and a practical component where students do complex labs and write up a report on their experiments.

"The theory paper is real-

It really sort of feels like this is a whole set of data which no one has gotten to see before.

Year 12 student Alexandra Vickery

ly, really interesting, because a lot of the time it's almost a way of teaching you something that's complex and challenging, without actually teaching you," he said.

"You're forced to learn yourself and figure out what's going on without having necessarily been taught it already."

Meanwhile, Alexandra has already started her practical task in collaboration with

team members from around Australia.

The students are collecting and analysing dirt samples with microplastics near synthetic fields to see how the plastic has degraded and what effects that might have on the environment.

She's collected samples from Telopea Park to contribute to this original research.

"I'm the only one who

collected the samples in Canberra so it really sort of feels like this is a whole set of data which no one has gotten to see before, a whole new effect which maybe we haven't considered yet and that's really exciting," she said.

As with many international events, the International Science Olympiad has been modified because of COVID-19 travel restrictions. James missed out on a trip to Lithuania and Alexandra would have travelled to Siberia.

Instead, the exams will take place at the Australian National University.

Physics competitors will have to isolate in a room for

24 hours before each exam without any contact with the outside world to allow the Olympiad team leaders to translate the papers from British English to avoid cultural misunderstandings. Unfortunately for James, the lockdown period falls on his 18th birthday.

Alexandra's Olympiad exam falls on the day before the ACT Scaling Test.

But the sacrifices are worth it for the year 12 students who have been able to meet many like-minded people from across Australia and the world.

"It's just enjoyable to talk with other people who also find it very interesting," James said.



Protesters 'commemorate' Anzac Hall

Kathryn Lewis

CROWDS gathered on Sunday night to "commemorate" Anzac Hall, which will be demolished under a controversial redevelopment of the Australian War Memorial.

"The vigil itself will be a really lovely way to mark the 20 years of memories that the public, veterans and veterans families have had in the existing Anzac Hall," Australian Institute of Architects ACT President Shannon Battinson said.

The Australian War Memorial's \$500 million expansion was given the green light by the National Capital Authority, clearing

the way for the 20-year-old Anzac Hall to be demolished for a new gallery space.

About 140 trees are slated for removal as part of the project's early works.

About 100 people attended the candlelit rally calling for the War Memorial to "press pause and listen".

Ms Battinson supported expanding exhibition space but said it should be done in a way that maintained the War Memorial building as a prominent feature on the site.

The project's approval followed a public consultation period in which the vast majority of submissions slammed the proposal,

noting the heritage value of the hall and removal of native trees.

"This is not how democracy works," Ms Battinson said.

"At every opportunity where the public have been given any form of chance to speak, overwhelmingly, that voice has been against the project."

Memorial director Matt Anderson earlier said the planned demolition and replacement of Anzac Hall would grow the institution's heritage value by creating more space to tell Australia's military history.

Former head of buildings and services at the War

Jane Aitken joined about 100 people at the Australian War Memorial to protest the approved expansion. **Picture: Keegan Carroll**

Memorial Stewart Mitchell said the redevelopment didn't understand the "commemorative power" of the existing site.

"It's simply tragic to know that excellent concepts for development exist which provide the additional space required without destroying the site's national and Commonwealth heritage listed attributes; and at considerably less cost," he said.

Resident Jane Aitken said it "broke her heart" to see the hall designed to "blend in" go, alongside scores of decades-old trees.

She was particularly concerned of the environmental impact of that loss.

Libs call for voucher scheme audit

Kathryn Lewis

THE Canberra Liberals have called for a "full and transparent" audit of the ACT government's discount voucher scheme after all the funds allocated to the overhauled program were spent in a day.

The ACT government estimated more than \$5 million had been spent in businesses since the scheme launched on June 9.

More than \$4 million of that was spent between Friday and Saturday.

"This injection into the economy is a combination of ChooseCBR funding and customers' own spending," a government spokeswoman said.

The \$2 million limit for the ChooseCBR vouchers was spent in 24 hours after it opened.

Canberrans have expressed frustration that they weren't able to use their allocated vouchers over the weekend, while questions have been raised over which businesses claimed the most vouchers.

The ACT government has refused to provide that detail, saying it was a privacy issue.

Opposition business spokeswoman Leanne Castley said an audit of the scheme was needed to "give the community the answers they are looking for".

"Concerns have been raised with me about the misuse of vouchers and the inequitable distribution of funds," Ms Castley said.

Almost 60,000 vouchers were redeemed by 30,000 customers although the government said it was possible people may have registered multiple times.

Customers could access up to three vouchers a day and use one per store.

A different phone number is needed for each registration.

"It is possible that individuals could have registered more than once if they were able to access more than one mobile phone number, but we are unable to verify this," she said.

While the government wouldn't release specific stores, the most popular businesses included cafes and restaurants.