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## Ansett rescue deal collapses

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# Judge slams uni's rough justice

By ABAN CONTRACTOR

The University of Wollongong gave academic Ted Steele less natural justice than a murderer could expect when it sacked him without warning a year ago, a Federal Court judge said yesterday.

Hearing a Full Court appeal by the university against an earlier judgment that the university had erred when it sacked Dr Steele, presiding judge Justice Murray Wilcox said he was shocked by the behaviour of the university.

"I find it remarkable that a university, of all institutions, of all employers, an institution that we've

been brought up to regard as open and liberal and fair should seek to exercise the power to sack somebody for discipline reasons without giving notification to them. I find (it) extraordinary, I have to say," Justice Wilcox told the hearing.

"Look, even murderers are entitled to be heard in their defence.

"The suggestion that an academic, whatever his or her offence, is not allowed to make a defence, for a university to put that proposition, I repeat, I just find it a shocking proposition."

A second judge, Justice Conti,

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THE QUEEN'S MAN: A sombre Governor-General greeted the Queen in Adelaide yesterday. They later chatted privately.

Picture: REUTERS

## Two premiers, a G-G and the Queen

A Governor-General defying calls to resign and two men calling themselves South Australian Premier welcomed the Queen to Australia yesterday.

There was no red carpet and little regal fanfare when the royals arrived at Adelaide Airport early in the afternoon, as most interest centred on the jostling identities who greeted the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh.

The first to welcome the Queen was Governor-General Peter Hollingworth, who is under pressure to resign over his handling of sex abuse cases while Archbishop of Brisbane.

The Governor-General later smiled frequently as he chatted with the Queen at a ceremonial welcome at Government House before the pair had a private audience.

South Australian caretaker premier Rob Kerin and SA Labor leader and premier-elect Mike Rann were also among the official welcoming party.

Although Mr Rann claims to have won the recent SA election, the Queen was first introduced to Mr Kerin, who remains caretaker premier until State Parliament sits on March 5.

Prime Minister John Howard, meanwhile, denied the ongoing controversy surrounding Dr Hollingworth was an embarrassment, given the royals' presence.

"The suggestion that unimaginable embarrassment has been created for the Queen in relation to this issue is ... a complete beat-up," he said.

"Her Majesty is a very experienced person in dealing with a whole lot of situations, both difficult and easy.

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## Judge slams university's rough justice

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said the kind of allegations made by Dr Steele appeared "legion" as a result of the funding difficulties that universities have had to face in more recent years.

"I read the newspapers and I hear from friends in university those sorts of complaints are legion," he said.

"I don't know (what the) big deal is," he said.

Dr Steele, a senior biologist who had been at the University of Wollongong for 16 years, was sacked by the university's Vice-Chancellor Professor Gerard Sutton after telling the Sydney Morning Herald at the height of last year's soft-marking furore he had been told to upgrade student marks.

Counsel for the university, Geoffrey Flick, SC, said the university regarded the case as important because it wanted to know if it had the power to terminate an employee without notice.

"As we would have it, it would be exceptional to deny an employer that power," Dr Flick told the court.

But Justice Wilcox said it would be a very exceptional employer that could lay claim to such a power.

"And for that to be claimed by a university, it shocks me a little," he said.

A spokesman for the university said comments made by the judges were made without access to the full facts of the case.

"The university firmly rejects any suggestion



**UNI CASE:** Dr Steele outside the Federal Court in Sydney.  
 Picture: NICK MOIR, Fairfax

that Dr Steele was denied an opportunity to have his say," the spokesman said.

National Tertiary Education Union president Carolyn Allport said Dr Steele had been without work and pay for 12 months.

"We remain confident that the full Federal Court will confirm Justice Branson's earlier decision and

that we will soon see Dr Steele reinstated," Dr Allport said. "We believe that this will send an important message to all university managers that allegations against staff must be tested before dismissal is considered."

The Full Bench reserved its judgment and is expected to rule within weeks.

(Sydney Morning Herald)

## Hotfooting it

Thirty workmates are nursing very sore feet after a confidence-building fire-walking exercise proved too hot to handle at a NSW resort yesterday.

Seven people were admitted to Newcastle's John Hunter Hospital with deep burns and 13 others with less serious injuries were treated at a medical centre after the exercise went wrong at Salamander Bay's Horizon Golf Resort.

## Milligan dies

LONDON.- Author and comic Spike Milligan died yesterday at his home in Sussex, his agent said late last night.

The Goon Show legend was born in India on April 16, 1918.

He was the favourite comic of Prince Charles even though, when accepting the British Comedy award for Lifetime Achievement, he famously called Charles a "grovelling little bastard" on live TV.

## Looking ahead in 2002

The latest in news, tips and views from Mark McKenzie, Area General Manager, Telstra Country Wide™.

### Service restoration continues

Bushfires affected more than 11,000 services in the Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven area between Christmas Day and January 5<sup>th</sup>. Telstra brought in extra service crews to help restore services, and we are happy to report that work is nearing completion. Any customers experiencing problems with their services can contact Telstra's Fault Line on 13 2203.



Mark McKenzie, Area General Manager, Telstra Country Wide.

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Telstra Country Wide is continuing to improve the depth of coverage for mobile customers. The Kangaroo Valley digital CDMA tower was commissioned late last year, and work has already begun on the construction of another tower in South Nowra. Further expansions are planned along the south coast of Jervis Bay, in the northern Highlands, and south of Ulladulla.

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# Railway chaos as rain causes closure, delay

By LOUISE TURK

The Illawarra's peak-hour rail system was thrown into chaos last night when heavy rain forced the temporary closure of rail lines between Waterfall and Thirroul.

Hundreds of train commuters crammed Waterfall station from 5.30pm as they waited for a fleet of buses to transport them south.

In lousy weather conditions, 25 buses ferried weary commuters to Thirroul station and further south.

The line closure, which lasted for 70 minutes, resulted in major delays and inconvenience for many commuters.

A CityRail spokeswoman said the line was closed as a safety precaution after landslip detectors were activated in the storm and turned the signals red. There was no damage to the tracks.

"The detectors are installed along the rail corridor to test the grade of the soil, the amount of rainfall and the potential for that land to slip," she said.

"This (the activation of the detectors) is a fairly rare occurrence and happens only in

extreme weather in which there has been a significant amount of rain."

Denise Allen, who is visiting the Illawarra, was delayed at Helensburgh for about 90 minutes after her train pulled in at the station.

"I waited in the train and read a book while we waited for the signals to turn green," she said. "Before we stopped at Helensburgh there was a very heavy shower and you could see the rain running down the surrounding hills."

Wollongong Rural Fire Service group captain Layne Hardie was driving from Bulli to Helensburgh just after 5pm.

Mr Hardie said driving conditions were atrocious, especially along Bulli Pass in which the relentless rain had formed "rivers" on the road.

He said he encountered hail several times during his slow and treacherous journey home to Helensburgh.

Integral Energy said the extreme weather affected power supply to Coledale, Austinmer, Wombarra and Thirroul last night.



**LONG WAIT:** After experiencing long delays on her train journey, Denise Allen (right) is met at Thirroul railway station by her friend Dave Jenkins, of Bulli.

Picture: WAYNE VENABLES

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