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What next, when the war is over

Brendan O'Keefe

HOW democracy takes root (or doesn't) after conflict in places such as Iraq and East Timor will be the focus of study for international law professor Hilary Charlesworth after she won one of 24 Federation Fellowships awarded last week.

The fellowship, worth about \$235,000 a year for five years, would allow Professor Charlesworth, of the Australian National University, to travel to the trouble-spots to see first hand how governance rises from the ashes of war.

Professor Charlesworth said she had been struck by how "all the solutions [for Iraq and East Timor] seem to have been developed ad hoc". "People just go into each new place and often just start from the ground and say: 'What will we do here?'"

Simple and unsophisticated models of democracy tended to ignore cultural subtleties: what if the people elect a religious fundamentalist government? Is that democracy? What if they say "women have a different sphere from men and shouldn't be too closely involved".

"Do you say 'sorry, we've got different standards' or do you say 'we'll just follow whatever you tell

us,'" Professor Charlesworth said.

Democracy was too often linked just with elections: as long as there is a poll and there are two parties, "we're home and hosed".

Professor Charlesworth said the fellowship would allow her to have a team of doctoral students choose a case study and follow it through.

It was a spur to stay in Australia.

"I don't want to pretend that I was about to leave, because I wasn't, but there's no question that the type of research you're able to do and the type of support you get at US and European universities is so superb that we're not usually able to match it here," she said.

"This is a great incentive to stay here and to contribute."

Professor Charlesworth said she hoped her selection would inspire other non-sciences women to "throw their hats in the ring" and apply for a fellowship.

University of NSW climatologist Matthew England said his fellowship was "the biggest thing ... a once-in-a-career opportunity" that would allow him to expand his team of postdoctoral and PhD researchers and to research climate change full-time, rather than squeezing lab work in be-

tween teaching commitments.

Laboratories were emerging in the US and the UK and were tempting, but now Professor England could concentrate in Australia on his work on reading the southern oceans and the influence they have on Australia's climate.

He has been studying a jet stream which skirts the southern Australian coast; it has been active further south than normal in recent years, blocking rain-bearing depressions.

Fellowships announced

EDUCATION Minister Brendan Nelson last week announced 24 researchers would share Australian Research Council Federation Fellowships worth \$40 million during the next five years. Four recipients were Australians working overseas who would return home; five went to foreign nationals; and 15 were awarded to Australia-based researchers.

 **LINKS**

www.dest.gov.au/ministers/nelson/main.asp



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Beyond ad hoc: Hilary Charlesworth will investigate the emergence of governance after war

Picture: Bob Finlayson

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