

NEWS

Cure for many phobias could be virtual reality

Third day in court

WILLOUGHBY Council met developer Eric Sanderson for the third time in the Land and Environment Court last week over his plans to build a 72-place childcare centre in Naremburn. The council has already rejected three development applications and won two court cases to stop the centre going ahead on Donnelly Rd – a 25m long dead-end street. The issue raised last Thursday concerned emergency evacuation plans. The court is yet to hand down a decision.

Deadline looms

THE annual Day of Difference contest deadline is looming. Run by Vodafone, it allows five Australians to spend a year pursuing their personal philanthropic goals, while the telco picks up the tab. Last year's winner was Killara resident Debbie Colyer who was born with Phenylketonuria – a potentially fatal metabolic condition. Send details of your personal goals and nominated charity or not-for-profit organisation to vodafone.com.au/worldofdifference. Entries close on February 7.

'Beaudaful' tips

CON the Fruiterer from 90s series *The Comedy Company*, will be at Fruitezy Fruit Market, Chatswood Chase, at 2pm next Friday. Actor Mark Mitchell will provide some tips about how to select and store fruit.

Eyeball the prize

THE Workshop Arts Centre in Willoughby is featuring the work of two winners in the 2009 Ewart Art Prize, Lynda Gibbins and Ingrid Hawke, until tomorrow week at its 33 Laurel St gallery.



CURE BEFORE OUR VERY EYES: Dr Eric Malbos says the most important part of the treatment of any phobia is gradual exposure to it. Picture: DANIELLE BUTTERS -PP367051

JANNE SELETTO

COMPUTER games, 3D movies such as *Avatar* and now ... a treatment for agoraphobia.

While virtual reality and 3D animation is well established in the entertainment industry, the powerful computer programs are just starting to be used in medical treatment and education roles.

Eric Malbos is a French medico and PhD student at Macquarie

University who has been playing computer games since he was five.

He has come to Sydney to set up Australia's first trial of virtual reality treatment for agoraphobia.

Dr Malbos said phobias could be very debilitating.

"People are afraid of being in places where they can't see where the door is to get out. So they are afraid of taking lifts, catching trains or planes or being in a crowd, say in the supermarket or the cinema. They are also afraid in wide, open

spaces. It really impairs their life."

Dr Malbos said the most important part of the treatment of any phobia was gradual exposure and desensitisation, something that can be achieved in the virtual world with more control than in real life.

"I have spent the past year building a virtual world," he said. "It has city streets, buildings with lifts, a supermarket and so on – all the situations that people are afraid of. "When you put on the headset and headphones, you are inside the

computerised world and can navigate and interact with it."

Dr Malbos said the patient had control of the situation. "We are seeing a glimpse of the future."

If you have agoraphobia and want to join the trial, email Eric.Malbos@psy.mq.edu.au or call 9850 8711.

Positive for young and old: Editorial, Page 28

Do you think this will help cure phobias? Comment at northshoretimes.com.au

Lane Cove Council

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

Notice is given in accordance with Sections 79 and 79C(1) of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act) as amended and Clause 18B (heritage items) of the *Lane Cove Local Environmental Plan 1987* (LEP). Council is in receipt of a development application DA No. 294/09 for alterations and additions to existing building and construction of a new dwelling to create a detached dual occupancy, basement carpark and subdivision at 19 Glenview Street, Greenwich which is included on Council's Heritage Schedule.

The development is not a designated development under the EP&A Act as amended. The applicant for the development is H & W Pty Ltd and the consent authority is Lane Cove Council.

The application may be viewed at the Civic Centre, 48 Longueville Road, Lane Cove between 8.30am and 5.00pm Mondays to Fridays and at Council's Central Library during operating hours for 30 days from Friday, 15 January 2010. During this period, submissions in relation to the proposed development will be accepted.

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www.lanecove.nsw.gov.au

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