RESEARCHER wins national award

RESEARCH that could help HIV/AIDS and cancer patients retain muscle mass and independent living has won the inaugural national award from the Australian Association for Exercise and Sport Science (AAESS).

Dr Stephen Bird from the School of Human Movement Studies at Charles Sturt University (CSU) was deemed to have submitted the most outstanding PhD thesis in 2005.

The AAESS Medal 2006 award was announced at the biennial Exercise and Sport Science Conference in Sydney last September, at which Dr Bird also presented a paper on his thesis.

Dr Bird’s doctoral thesis was nominated by his supervisor, Associate Professor Frank Marino, and was chosen by the judging panel from nominations from 10 Australian universities.

“The award was judged in the light of the unique research that was undertaken at CSU, which is why it was chosen above some of the other major universities in Australia,” Dr Bird said.

“It aligns CSU as a leader in certain areas of research.

“Specifically, our research looks at the use of resistance exercise and nutritional strategies to influence hormones involved in muscle growth, with the aim of reducing muscle breakdown. Such strategies may be useful in minimising muscle-wasting associated with diseases such as HIV/AIDS and cancer. This may help patients retain muscle mass and thus some independence in living.

“We have a lot of pride in the fact that our research is practical and can be applied in the real world,” Dr Bird said.

Dr Bird is an accredited exercise physiologist. He accepted a position with CSU as a lecturer in exercise rehabilitation in April 2006 following completion of his PhD.

He has several research projects underway within the Exercise and Nutrition Research Group he leads within the School of Human Movement Studies.

Following presentation of his research at recent conferences, his expertise is being sought by elite professional teams in rugby league, AFL and basketball to try to maximise their performance through exercise and nutrition.

Four papers by Dr Bird and the University’s Exercise and Nutrition Research Group have been published recently in international professional journals in the United States and Europe.

“We are now receiving requests to write critical reviews for these international journals,” Dr Bird said.

Course applications to the CSU School of Human Movement Studies have increased in recent years, especially since the rehabilitation strand has been added to the human movement degree.

Graduates can apply for accreditation as an exercise physiologist in order to obtain a Medicare provider number as an allied health professional.