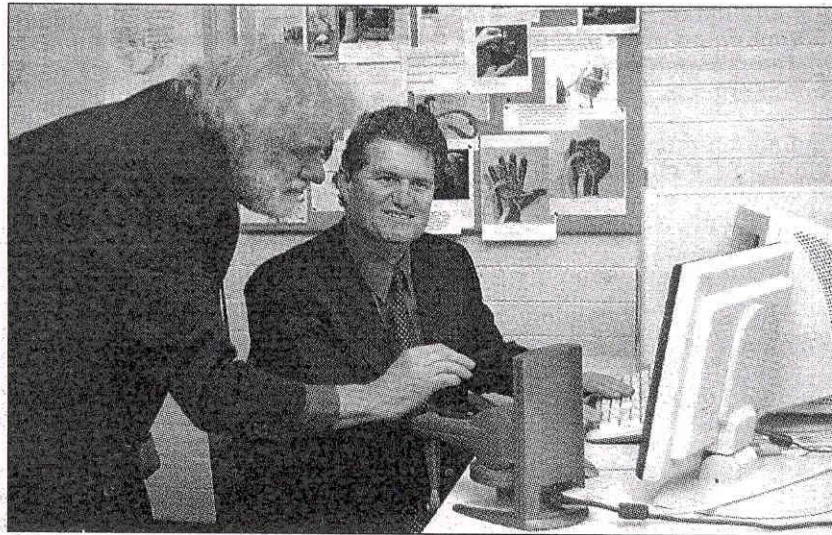


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## Advances in world first technology



**Officially open:** Federal Science Minister Peter McGauran and senior lecturer Barry Richardson in the new Bionics and Cognitive Science Centre at Monash Gippsland.

FEDERAL Science Minister Peter McGauran officially opened the Bionics and Cognitive Science Centre at Monash University Gippsland last week.

The centre, which received \$360,000 in Federal Government funding, has been operating since the start of the year and already inroads are being made into world first technology. Researchers at the centre are currently devising a program that would allow users to feel virtual objects with their fingertips, rather than just see or hear them.

Senior lecturer Barry Richardson said with the innovative research it could soon be possible to feel objects "that aren't there". "No-one in the world has yet created a virtual object that you can feel with your fingertips," Dr Richardson said.

He said the technology could be applied to telesurgery where surgeons can work on patients from several hundred kilo-

metres away. "They can see a video of what they are doing and feel organs in the body that are not there."

The technology could also be used as training simulators for flying lessons.

Mr McGauran said until now, virtual technology had relied on sights and sounds to create a virtual environment, but the centre would create a way for people to touch and feel an object that only existed in the real world.

"Thanks to the hands-on virtual technology, surgeons can practise on 'virtual patients' and trainee pilots can take off and land at 'virtual airports'. For fun, Wimbledon wannabes will be able to feel the impact of a virtual Pat Rafter serve or a budding Anthony Mundine could go three rounds with a world champion boxer.

"I'm delighted to see such leading edge research being developed here at Monash Gippsland," Mr McGauran said.