

Wearing lace is no picnic attire

ANNA VLACH
FASHION EDITOR

LACE'S prim and proper reputation is in tatters as designers bring back sexy.

International and Australian collections in recent season have embraced lace with an ethereal edge in the style of garments featured in the classic film *Picnic at Hanging Rock*.

The latest-look lace, however, is edgy, as with the yolk on the body-conscious black dress worn by Adelaide model Clare Venema, who appeared in last week's David Jones Autumn Winter Fashion Launch in Sydney.

Exclusive to the department store and designed by Dannii Minogue and Tabitha Somerset Webb, the Project D dress features black lace with metallic highlights – a mini trend also showcased in the new collection by internationally renowned designer Collette Dinnigan.

The South African-born Australian designer has experimented with lace, also creating a frock fashioned from chantilly that has been laminated for a "harder, more modern edge".

Dinnigan, who launched her label more than 20 years ago with couture lingerie, agreed lace with a rock'n'roll feel would be one of winter's strongest trends.

She said, however, lace was not "back" in vogue. "Lace has never left," she said.

"It's always been something very romantic and very feminine."



TREND: Adelaide model Clare Venema in an outfit from David Jones while, inset, a scene from *Picnic At Hanging Rock*.



Experts' warning

Super schools a crime haven

SUPER schools will lead to higher crime rates, experts predict.

A US criminologist and state education professionals say super schools will lead to more schoolyard violence, theft, substance abuse and gang participation.

Texas State University's Professor Marcus Felson argues that large schools put more problem students together and make it difficult to supervise behaviour.

Blair Athol school, the first of six planned super schools operating under a \$200 million government plan, opened last month. Others are at Taperoo, Smithfield Plains and Woodville Gardens.

Professor Felson, whose research was discussed at a crime prevention conference in Adelaide, said big schools made it more difficult to identify and control students.

"The worst 2 per cent of 800 (students) is 16, the worst 2 per cent of 2000 (students) is 40, (so) it's much harder to divide and conquer (problem students)," he said.

South Australian Association of State School Organisations director David Knuckey was also critical of super schools.

"There is a plethora of research, both local and international, which shows a clear link between school size and the quality of school life for both staff and students and the quality of education," he said. "Research shows ... violence, theft, substance abuse and gang participation are

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worse in large schools." The association asked the government to postpone super schools and review if they were "in the best interests of SA's public-school children".

The biggest super school, Mark Oliphant College at Munno Para, has an enrolment capacity of 1420.

Education Minister Jay Weatherill rejected claims the schools were "too large", saying the student population would be no greater than some existing schools.

"American research on large schools is based on schools of several thousand students," he said.

"Our new schools are no larger than many other public and non-government schools and some of them cater for very small numbers of students."

Mr Weatherill said enrolments at the largest birth-to-12 school – Mark Oliphant College – were substantially less than at non-government schools such as St Peters College and Westminster.

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