



# Australian Neuroscience Society Newsletter

No. 3

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[www.ans.org.au](http://www.ans.org.au)



## President's Perspective

**Eureka Prize.** Congratulations to Trevor Kilpatrick and the Multiple Sclerosis Group at the Howard Florey Institute on being awarded the prestigious Eureka Prize for Medical Research in 2008. The Australian Museum Eureka Prizes are the nation's highest profile science awards. The 26 researchers and students in the MS Group are developing therapies that either target the neurodegenerative component of MS or enhance the capacity for nervous system repair. They are concentrating on three areas of research: stem cell biology, neuroprotection, and the development of imaging techniques to analyse the efficacy of therapeutic candidates.

**State-Based Activities.** The organisation of the Annual Scientific Meeting is the most important function of ANS. The Council, the Local Organising Committee and Sally Jay Conferences put a great deal of effort into ensuring the high quality of the Meetings, which invariably are well received by the membership. But the question arises, is ANS doing enough to support our members in the other 51 weeks of the year? This has led Council to consider how the Society can encourage and support state-based activities. It is clear that a top-down approach is usually not appropriate here, although the great success of the Brain Bee throughout Australia and New Zealand indicates there are important exceptions.

There is not a one-size-fits-all solution to promoting communication between members in each state. It is not surprising that those states with smaller numbers of members have found it easier to organise activities that are broadly inclusive. Examples this year include workshops organised in the ACT, Western Australia and South Australia, with financial assistance provided by ANS. Maarten Kole and Clarke Raymond from the Australian National University organised the Kioloa Neuroscience Colloquium on 12-13 April; the plenary lectures by Pankaj Sah and Vaughan Macefield were sponsored by ANS. Bernadette Madja from the University of Western Australia organised the Symposium of Western Australian Neuroscience (SWAN) on 19<sup>th</sup> September to promote exchange between researchers and clinicians on the theme of "Repair and Renew"; ANS sponsored two prizes for PhD students, which will assist them to attend the Canberra ANS Meeting.

Nick Spencer from Flinders University organised a workshop on "The Future of Neuroscience in South Australia" on 21<sup>st</sup> August, under the auspices of ANS and the South Australian Neuroscience Institute (SANI). I was delighted to attend the workshop at the National Wine Centre and particularly enjoyed the presentations by Marcello Costa and Robert Vink on the history and future of neuroscience in the state. I congratulate Nick and his colleagues on organising such an outstanding event.

In those states with a large number of ANS members, the state representative on Council may not know many of the members personally, and vice-versa, particularly if the members are spread over many universities and institutes. Council has been encouraging the formation of state committees to promote state-based neuroscience activities and Joanne Britto has got the ball rolling in Victoria. The Victorian Committee has representatives from the University of Melbourne, Monash University, the Howard Florey Institute, the Brain Research Institute, the Mental Health Research Institute of Victoria and the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute.

On 1<sup>st</sup> September, I had the chance to talk about some of these issues with young neuroscientists in Victoria when I was invited by Rogan Tinsley and Toby Merson to meet with the committee members of the Postdoctoral Association of the Howard Florey Institute (PAHFI). Toby has written a short article for this newsletter explaining how PAHFI looks after the interests

of postdocs, who are a vital part of neuroscience research but have not historically been given a separate voice. I am also grateful to Toby and PAHFI for organising and funding the inaugural Early-Career Researchers' Function at the 2008 Hobart Meeting; this will be repeated at the 2009 Canberra Meeting, with sponsorship from HFI, QBI, Scientifix and ANS.

**NeuroSciences Australia.** While quite a few ANS members will be aware of the new initiative being developed by NeuroSciences Australia (NSA) to greatly expand targeted funding for research on disorders of the brain, many members may be unaware of even the existence of NSA. Consequently I have asked Peter Schofield to contribute an article for this newsletter on NSA and its initiative. Although NSA may be confused with ANS because of the unfortunate similarity in their names, there are fundamental differences in the goals of the two organisations. ANS exists to serve all neuroscientists and all neuroscience research in Australia and New Zealand; NSA is in the business of picking winners in neuroscience research. The goals are not necessarily incompatible and, indeed, in this era of plurality of neuroscience funding in Australia, there is room for different approaches to neuroscience representation and funding. Unlike the situation in the USA with the Society for Neuroscience, the professional representation of basic and clinical neuroscientists in Australia is rather fragmented, making it difficult for ANS to speak on behalf of the neurologists and psychiatrists, for example.

While NSA has been kind enough to invite me to attend their Board Meetings in a non-voting capacity, I have yet to come to a conclusion as to the merits of the initiative being pursued by NSA. Moreover, ANS Council has not formally discussed whether ANS would formally support an initiative, waiting for more concrete proposals to come from the working parties being established by NSA. The Officers and Council members will be guided in this matter by the views of the ANS membership. However, this is certainly not an us-vs-them situation: two-thirds of the 85 neuroscience leaders attending the NSA Workshop at the Garvan Institute on 22<sup>nd</sup> August were members of ANS, including the President, Past-President and Secretary of ANS. I think that most people who attended the Workshop were impressed by the great goodwill of the participants. This gives strength to the belief that, even if the NSA initiative does not achieve its stated goal of a quantal increase in research funding for disorders of the brain, the process itself will have lasting benefit for neuroscience in this country.

David Vaney  
7 October 2008

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## ANS 2009 – CANBERRA

ANS 2009 is to be held at the refurbished National Convention Centre in Canberra ACT, Tuesday 27 to Friday 30 January 2009. The LOC, chaired by Michael Ibbotson, has put together exciting scientific and social programs for what promises to be a rewarding and enlightening meeting. Members are reminded that quite apart from its many historic and cultural attractions there are excellent Australia Day activities in Canberra (Australia Day being the day before ANS2009 starts).

The Social program will include a Welcome Reception on the Tuesday night, Cocktail Party on the Wednesday night, followed by a Student Mixer and the newly introduced Post-Doctoral Social, which is becoming a popular event at ANS meetings. On Thursday night the Conference Dinner will be held at the prestigious New Parliament House. Pre-dinner drinks will be served in the beautiful Marble Foyer and delegates will then move to the spectacular Great Hall for dinner. This will be a memorable evening with an opportunity for you to experience a unique part of Australia's heritage.

We anticipate this being the largest meeting ever, with four plenary speakers and thirteen symposia (including the Presidential Symposium, introduced last year). Our Plenary Lecturers include Matthew Wilson, Philip Beart, Peter Reilly and Greg Stuart. The oral communications and posters will reflect the cutting edge of neuroscience in Australia and overseas.

The meeting will conclude with Farewell Drinks on the Friday afternoon, which will be combined with the presentation of poster and oral prizes.

Make sure you lock in the last week in January for Australia Day in Canberra and ANS 2009.

## ANS 2009 PLENARY LECTURES

**ANS Plenary Lecture:** Professor Greg Stuart, The John Curtin School of Medical Research, The Australian National University, ACT.

**Overseas Plenary Lecture:** Professor Matthew Wilson, The Picower Institute for Learning and Memory, MIT, USA.

**Lawrie Austin Lecture:** Professor Philip Beart, The Howard Florey Institute, University of Melbourne, VIC.

**Eccles Lecture:** Prof. Peter Reilly AO, Director of Neurosurgery, Royal Adelaide Hospital and Clinical Professor of Neurosurgery, Department of Surgery, University of Adelaide, SA.

### ***The Presidential Symposium***

Chairs: ANS President, David Vaney and ANS Past-President Glenda Halliday

The Presidential Symposium will feature plenary presentations from four young teaching academics who successfully combine outstanding neuroscience research with undergraduate teaching.

## ANS 2009 SATELLITE MEETINGS

### ***Sensorimotor Control: the jaw and more***

Tuesday 27 January 2009

Venue: Finkel Lecture Theatre: John Curtin School of Medical Research, ANU.

Organiser: Dr Simon Gandevia (with a small POWMRI committee)  
Further information: Ms Andrea Riley (a.riley@unsw.edu.au; 02 9399 1016). Web address: <http://sensorimotor-ans2009.powmri.edu.au>

### ***Dementia, Ageing and Neurodegenerative DISEases Group (DANDIS)***

Tuesday, 27 January 2009

Further information: Dr Claire Shepherd: c.shepherd@powmri.edu.au

### ***Vision: From Photoreceptors to Behaviour***

Saturday, 31 January 2009

The Shine Dome, Canberra, ACT

Further information: Professor Jan Provis: jan.provis@anu.edu.au

### ***6th Australasian Auditory Neuroscience Workshop***

Further information: Dr Wham Mulders [hmulders@cyllene.uwa.edu.au](mailto:hmulders@cyllene.uwa.edu.au)

## ANS COUNCIL ELECTIONS

### ***Call for Nominations–***

ANS calls for nominations for ANS Council positions that fall vacant in 2008. Council positions that are falling vacant are:

a) **President, 2010-2011.** The incumbent would also serve on ANS Executive and Council as ANS President-Elect in 2009 and Past-President in 2012. We urge suitably qualified members to consider standing for the position. If you would like more information about what the position entails, please contact the current ANS President Prof. David Vaney ([d.vaney@uq.edu.au](mailto:d.vaney@uq.edu.au)).

b) **Council Representatives for Queensland, Tasmania and NSW.** The current Queensland and Tasmanian representatives, Helen Cooper and Lisa Foa, are not eligible to renominate. The current NSW representative, Peregrine Osborne has only served one term as State Representative and is eligible to be renominated for a second consecutive term.

To nominate for a position, please fill out a nomination form and send to the ANS Secretariat, Sally Jay Conferences ([ans@sallyjay-conferences.com.au](mailto:ans@sallyjay-conferences.com.au) or fax 08 8362 0038) by November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2008. Nomination forms are available for download from the ANS website on the About ANS page. In the event of more than one nomination for a position, a postal ballot must be held prior to the 2009 AGM. The Society strongly encourages multiple nominations for each Council position in order to ensure the best possible representation for ANS members.

## ANS AWARDS AND PRIZES

### ***Call for Nominations –***

See ANS website ([www.ANS.org.au](http://www.ANS.org.au)) for more details. Nominations for all 2009 prizes and awards are due by November 20<sup>th</sup> 2008 and should be submitted to the ANS Secretary, Ann Turnley ([turnley@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:turnley@unimelb.edu.au)). Applicants must be Members in good standing on the 30th June in the year of nomination.

**AW Campbell Award:** The A.W. Campbell Award commemorates the eminent Australian Neurologist whose "Histological studies on the localisation of cerebral function" in 1905 founded cerebral cytoarchitectonics. It is for the best contribution by a member of the society in their first five postdoctoral years.

Candidates should nominate themselves (within 7 years of the award of their doctorate, at the deadline for nominations) by emailing their CV (including list of publications) and a synopsis of up to 5 pages outlining their contribution to neuroscience. The successful candidate will receive a certificate and a contribution towards travel expenses to the meeting at which the award is made. They may be asked to give a 5 min presentation about their work to the Annual General Meeting of the Society.

**Nina Kondelos Prize:** The Nina Kondelos Prize is awarded to a female neuroscientist for outstanding contribution to basic or clinical neuroscience research. The Nina Kondelos Prize was made possible by a donation to the Society by Professor George Paxinos, and it is named after his late sister. The Nina Kondelos Prize was awarded for the first time in 2007 at the IBRO2007 World Congress of Neuroscience in Melbourne. Successful nominees will receive \$500 plus a certificate.

### ***Rules for the Nina Kondelos Prize:***

1. The nominee must be a female member of ANS and the achievement must be in the field of neuroscience.
2. The nominee must not have received other major national or international prizes such as the PM's Prize, Ramaciotti and Glaxo.
3. Each nominee must be proposed by one nominator, who must also list three supporters. Nominator and supporters must be members of ANS.
4. The nomination must include a one-page description of achievement and a three-page CV.
5. The prize shall be judged by a committee appointed by Council.

## ANS AWARDS AND PRIZES (contin.)

**Paxinos-Watson Prize:** This award has been made possible by a generous donation to the Society by Professor George Paxinos and Professor Charles Watson, commemorating the new edition of their important key reference text "The Rat Brain in Stereotaxic Coordinates" by Academic Press. The award was established for the most significant neuroscience paper published by a full member of the society, and is judged annually.

*Rules for the Paxinos-Watson Prize:*

1. Any Member of ANS may nominate one of their papers in the field of neuroscience; other authors may be Members or non-members of the Society.
2. No Member may nominate more than one paper per year, but may be a co-author on a paper nominated by another Member.
3. The research in the paper must have been substantially undertaken within Australia or New Zealand.
4. The judges will rank the nominated papers on the basis of their scientific significance.

A PDF file of the paper, bearing 2007 as the year of publication, should be submitted. The nomination may also be supported by up to two short submissions (max 500 words each) from ANS members explaining why they think the paper is significant. The prize will be awarded to the paper. All authors will receive a certificate, and the prize money will be sent to the nominating authors who will be required to report how it was shared between the authors.

**ANS Neurochemistry Funds:** The Fund was established using profits from the 1991 International Society for Neurochemistry meeting in Sydney. Investment income from the fund (typically \$1000-\$1500 per year) is available to support several types of activity. (1) To provide a contribution towards supporting an overseas neurochemistry speaker to visit departments in several locations and give seminars/workshops (not necessarily to attend the ANS meeting), (2) to provide a contribution towards travel expenses of a late-stage PhD student or junior postdoc to attend an overseas neurochemistry conference, (3) to help sponsor a neurochemistry-related symposium at the annual ANS meeting, or (4) for other neurochemistry-related purposes.

The selection criteria are that the proposed use of funds be (i) of broadest interest to Australian neurochemistry and (ii) of value to the broader ANS community. There is no fixed format for an application, but it should include details of the activity for which support is sought and the ways this activity meets the selection criteria. Applicants seeking support for an overseas visitor should include a copy of the visitor's curriculum vitae. Where support is requested for the applicant to attend a meeting, they should include their own curriculum vitae. Applications will be evaluated by 2-3 neurochemists who are ANS members.

For information about international neurochemistry meetings, see: [http://www.neurochemistry.org/pages/meetings\\_index.htm](http://www.neurochemistry.org/pages/meetings_index.htm)

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## *NeuroSciences Australia (NSA) and the development of an Australian Neuroscience Initiative*

NeuroSciences Australia was established some years ago as a not-for-profit company to administer the National Neuroscience Facility (NNF) and its various Platforms. The NNF was established in 2002 as part of the Commonwealth Government's Major National Research Facilities Program, which has now concluded.

After consultation with the Australian neuroscience community, NeuroSciences Australia undertook a major restructure and the new Board now comprises three Directors from the company's members (Prof Lyn Beazley, Prof Robert Rush, Prof Bruce Tonge) and three independent Directors (currently represented by Dr Michael Wooldridge, the Chairman, and Prof Peter Schofield). Dr Andrew Milner, the part-time Chief Executive Officer is also a Director. In addition, the Board has invited the President of the Australian Neuroscience Society, Prof David Vaney to attend all Board meetings so as to ensure a close liaison with ANS and Prof Colin Masters is also invited to attend as Scientific Advisor. The new NSA Board has resolved to develop a compelling case for support for a national initiative to tackle the disease burden associated with the disorders of the brain.

Working in close consultation with the Australian neuroscience community, the Board wants to develop a case for funding that will allow the Australian neuroscience community to use its existing capabilities to make a major Australia-wide economic impact on one or more of these conditions. The scale of such funding should be well in excess of that obtained through present funding opportunities, and the scale of the outcomes should be measured in hundreds of millions of dollars annually.

As a first step in this process, around 85 representative leaders of the Australian neuroscience community attended a workshop at the Garvan Institute of Medical Research in late August. These neuroscience leaders were asked to provide specific input into the disease areas that warrant a major national research initiative and those areas in which Australia has a competitive advantage in implementing fundamental and translational research.

To help develop the 'Case for Support' the NSA Board has engaged Deloitte Insight Economics to develop an independent health economic analysis of the burden of conditions affecting the brain to delineate the major costs that will confront the Australian people over the next 10 to 20 years.

The invitees were provided with information on an extensive list of neurologic- and psychiatric-related conditions by rank order of DALYs lost in Australia in 2003 and the number of published Australian studies listed in the PubMed database relating to each condition. The workshop realised that we would have to develop themes comprising larger areas and after an initial interactive discussion, four major themes were proposed by a small group comprising; Past ANS Presidents, Prof Fred Mendelsohn and Prof Glenda Halliday, and two NHMRC GRP Chairs, Prof Sam Berkovic and A/Prof James Brock. The broad themes agreed to by the workshop were:

- Healthy Brains for our Children
- Maintaining Brains for Life
- Brain Recovery
- Mental Health

Other areas, such as sensory conditions, were proposed to fall within these headings in order to keep the numbers of theme areas manageable.

It was also agreed that these themes should fall under an overarching structure such as the Australian Institute for Brain Health and Wellbeing, although there was not unanimity on the wording of the Institute. This would be a virtual Institute, which would be formed to oversee any programs funded under this initiative. It would also be an advocacy organisation to represent the neuroscience community.

It was agreed that one or two major programs should be developed for each theme under the following guidelines:

- Highly innovative science
- Mission oriented with defined outcomes making major impact
- Translational in nature, with measurable economic outcomes which will impact on the growing burden of neuro-related disease on Australia's GDP
- Unique in Australia; not seeking funds for existing programs
- In the National interest
- Involves consumers in the research process
- \$25m to \$50m spend on each program over five years

## NEWS OF INTEREST TO MEMBERS

### *NSA Initiative* (contin.)

Breakout groups at the Workshop commenced an initial discussion to identify possible major programs. These discussions served to indicate the scale and challenge associated with their articulation to both politicians and the general public.

We are now in the process of convening Working Parties to identify one or two programs for development of funding proposals in each of the theme areas, and will then ask Deloitte Insight Economics to prepare economic analyses of the positive economic impact of these proposals for Australia. The Working Parties will be collaborative and transparent in their activities and we encourage participation in these Working Parties.

### **Australian Brain Bee:**

#### **ANS, Zeiss, and Universities around Australia and New Zealand team up to support Neuroscience Education and Community Outreach**

The Australia - New Zealand Brain Bee Challenge for 2008 has concluded with its first New Zealand and Australian Champions. Round one of the competition was held in schools throughout Australia and New Zealand with more than 4500 year 10 and 11 students taking up the challenge. Of these, around 100 or so students in every state/region were invited to participate in round 2 of the competition. Round 2 was held the week of 23 June in Universities in every capital city in Australia, except for Darwin, as well as in Otago and Auckland in New Zealand. Students were treated to talks by neuroscientists and tours of neuroscience labs to promote neuroscience as a career and each Universities campus as a place to study science. Students also competed as individuals or in teams for their school.

Winning individuals in each state/region are listed below. Carl Zeiss Australasia Pty Ltd provided microscopes for winning schools in every state/region. The winning individual finalist from each state/region was then invited to Brisbane for the 2008 National Final.

The National Final was held on 3-4 August at the Queensland Brain Institute. Airfares and accommodation for each finalist and a parent were sponsored by ANS. The two-day event put the nine competing students through their paces by challenging them in a gross anatomy test, a patient diagnosis test (run by Prof. John McGrath) and two oral exams. The plenary speaker, Prof. Jason Mattingley, entertained and wowed the audience with his talk on human attention and perception.

Winners were Stephen Mackereth, Kings College, Auckland and Jayson Jeganthan, Baulkham Hills High School, NSW. Runner-up was Casey Linton from Somerset College, QLD. Stephen and Jayson finished the final with almost perfect scores and will represent their countries in the international final to be held in Baltimore, USA in October 2009. Their trips are sponsored jointly by ANS, Carl Zeiss Australasia Pty, Ltd, and The Universities of Western Sydney and Auckland.

The 2008 ABBC competition marked a period of incredible growth and interest in the competition with more than 4500 students completing the round-one test, compared with 740 competing in 2007. We are looking forward to further growth in 2009 as we move the round-one test online and expand the competition into more schools in Australia and New Zealand. Thank you to all the state/region coordinators and their teams for a very successful competition this year!

Linda J. Richards,  
ABBC National Coordinator

#### **National Finalists**

Australian Capital Territory: Hayden Lee, Canberra Grammar School, Canberra  
Queensland: Casey Linton, Somerset College, Gold Coast  
New South Wales: Jayson Jeganthan, Baulkham Hills High School, Baulkham Hills

The restructure of the NSA Board provides an opportunity for the Australian Neuroscience community to develop a compelling case for a major Federal Government funding program in which Australian neuroscientists can harness their existing capabilities and strengths to make a major Australia-wide economic impact in the burden associated with brain diseases and disorders. The NSA Board looks forward to working with the Australian Neuroscience Society Council and members to develop these important initiatives for the enhancement of the health of all Australians.

Prof Peter R Schofield  
Prince of Wales Medical Research Institute  
NSA Director p.schofield@powmri.edu.au



**ABBC National Finalists:** (From left, back row: Casey Linton (QLD), Yasmin Soliman (WA), Hayden Lee (ACT), Katie Dyke (TAS), front row: Jayson Jeganthan (NSW), Kieran James Bunn (Otago), Jack Lowe (SA), Stephen Mackereth (Auckland), Stephanie Mercuri (VIC).

South Australia: Jack Lowe, Christian Brothers College, Adelaide  
Tasmania: Katie Dyke, Dominic College, Glenorchy  
Victoria: Stephanie Mercuri, Ruyton Girls' School, Melbourne  
Western Australia: Yasmin Soliman, St Mary's Anglican Girls' School, Perth  
Auckland, New Zealand: Stephen Mackereth, Kings College, Auckland  
Otago, New Zealand: Kieran James Bunn, Logan Park High School, Dunedin

*Want to be involved? You can volunteer to help your local state/region coordinator or offer to mentor an ABBC finalist student in your lab. The experience is very rewarding!*

#### **ABBC Coordinators:**

##### *New Zealand*

National Coordinator: Assoc. Prof. Louise Nicholson, University of Auckland (lfb.nicholson@auckland.ac.nz) (North Island coordinator)  
South Island: Assoc. Prof. Greg Anson, University of Otago (greg.anson@otago.ac.nz)

##### *Australia:*

National Coordinator: Linda J. Richards, Queensland Brain Institute (richards@uq.edu.au) (Queensland Coordinator)  
ACT: Prof. Greg Stuart, Australian National University (greg.stuart@anu.edu.au)  
NSW: Prof. Vaughan Macefield, University of Western Sydney (v.macefield@uws.edu.au)  
SA: Dr Paul Thomas, The University of Adelaide (paul.thomas@adelaide.edu.au)  
TAS: Dr Lisa Foa, The University of Tasmania (Lisa.Foa@utas.edu.au)  
VIC: Dr Juliet Taylor, Murdoch Children's Research Institute, (juliet.taylor@mcri.edu.au)  
WA: Dr Jennifer Rodger, The University of Western Australia, (jrodger@cylle.uwa.edu.au)

### ***SANI Workshop:***

#### **The Future of Neuroscience in South Australia**

On August 21st 2008, nearly 100 active neuroscientists from South Australia converged on the National Wine Center in Adelaide, for the inaugural neuroscience workshop entitled: "The future of Neuroscience in South Australia". The workshop began with introductions by Professors Marcello Costa and Robert Vink, co-chairs of SANI (South Australian Neuroscience Institute) on the past, present and future of Neuroscience in South Australia, followed by Professor David Vaney, President of the ANS, on the future of the Society. The afternoon oral sessions were devoted to showcasing the latest research methodologies and findings presented by bench-active neuroscientists from all three Universities within South Australia, with the aim of fostering collaboration and interaction between researchers.

Different aspects of neuroscience were presented by NH&MRC research fellows, Postdoctoral Fellows and teaching academics. More than 50 requests were received to speak on the day, but due to time constraints, this number had to be limited to 30. A number of fascinating talks were presented, ranging from pure clinical to basic research science. Paul Thomas from the University of Adelaide presented his latest findings using SOX knockout mice, data that was recently published in *Nature Genetics*. Paul recently was one of only two Australians to win the prestigious Pfizer research fellowship and the international neuroscience community will watch with interest his future accomplishments. The state of S.A is proud to welcome Paul back to Adelaide from the eastern states.

In the evening, David Vaney was dinner guest of the Steering Committee of SANI, when general local and national issues of neuroscience were discussed openly. All neuroscientists of South Australia are deeply indebted to David for taking the time to fly from Brisbane on the morning of the workshop to spend the day with us and speak on behalf of the ANS.

The success of the day was largely attributed to the financial support from ANS, SANI, Flinders University Center for Neuroscience, The University of Adelaide and The University of South Australia. Special thanks to the ANS Council for supporting state-based research activities in neuroscience. Based on the energy and enthusiasm of all those that attended the workshop, it is the hope that this function will serve as the impetus for annual meetings of a similar nature in years to come in South Australia.

Nick Spencer (S.A. representative to the ANS)  
Department of Human Physiology  
Flinders University of South Australia

### ***Professionalising the postdoctoral experience***

#### **– a case study**

Postdocs represent a core component of most biomedical research environments, be they university department or research institute. The formative years as a postdoc can in a very real sense make or break a research career. Decisions made at this time determine the direction of an individual's career into academia and/or research, or act as a stepping-stone to a host of other career paths. The experience of the recently formed Postdoctoral Association of the Howard Florey Institute (PAHFI) shows that professionalising the postdoctoral experience can offer many advantages to postdocs and their host institution.

PAHFI was established in 2006 to represent the interests of early career researchers at the Howard Florey Institute. The move to create a professional association was driven by postdocs themselves who felt there was no clear channel to direct relevant information to them. PAHFI sought to resolve these concerns by creating a voice for the postdoctoral body. This move was met with strong support from HFI director Professor Fred Mendelsohn and senior research and administrative staff.

A core interest of PAHFI has been to facilitate networking opportunities and career-related activities to assist young researchers establish themselves as independent researchers. Initiatives such as hosting career development and grant writing seminar series, organising

social gatherings with peers and senior research staff have brought greater recognition of the postdoc body as a whole and assisted individuals by ensuring they are well informed to make decisions that affect their career. From the institute's perspective, measures as simple as the creation of a group email address has helped ensure information is passed on. Professionalising the postdoc body has also led to greater representation on committees dealing with institute related matters.

In addition to acting at the level of the Institute, PAHFI has sought to establish links with other research institutes and university departments. We have established links with the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute, Brain Research Institute, Mental Health Research Institute, National Stroke Research Institute and the University of Melbourne. PAHFI has also consulted with ANS through discussions with former and current ANS Presidents Professor Glenda Halliday and Professor David Vaney, respectively. At the 2008 ANS Meeting in Hobart PAHFI hosted the inaugural Early Career Researcher Cocktail Function. At the 2009 ANS Meeting in Canberra, PAHFI is pleased to host the 2<sup>nd</sup> Early Career Researcher Cocktail Function with the generous financial support of the Howard Florey Institute, Queensland Brain Institute, Australian Neuroscience Society and Scientifix.

For more information please contact the current PAHFI Convenor Dr Rogan Tinsley ([rogan.tinsley@florey.edu.au](mailto:rogan.tinsley@florey.edu.au)).  
Tobias D. Merson, PhD

### ***ANS Register of Members***

The printed Register of Members has been a useful resource for finding contact details and research interests of members for many years. It is planned that this register will be available online as a searchable database on the ANS website from early/mid 2009. This will allow members to be identified based on research theme or research interest and will provide standard contact details. To be included in the online database, members will need to tick the 'Yes' box in the privacy section, either when they are registering for the ANS Annual conference or when they are renewing ANS membership.

### ***Establishment of a Neurotrauma Tissue and Fluid Bank within the Australian Brain Bank Network***

The Neurotrauma Tissue and Fluid Bank (NTB), a subdivision of the Australian Brain Bank Network (ABBN), has been established to provide high quality TBI post mortem human CNS tissues from individuals who have died within two weeks of sustaining a severe closed head injury. Frozen and fixed brain tissue is stored. A neuropathologic examination is performed, available clinical data is collated and basic information of tissue availability is linked to the ABBN website (<http://www.nnf.com.au/platforms/nntrc>). Tissue is available on request, for research within the Neuroscience community.

The NTB works in conjunction with the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine (VIFM). The VIFM screens cases that arrive for NTB suitability. Consent is sought by the VIFM for appropriate cases and upon returning positive cases are referred to the NTB for collection. Immediately following brain removal, two coronal sections 1cm posterior to the mamillary bodies and two transverse sections of brain stem, at mid-pons level are obtained. One coronal section and one transverse brain section slice are fresh frozen and the two remaining sections are formalin fixed. Neuropathological examination of the formalin fixed tissue, performed at The Alfred Hospital, complement the autopsy report received from the VIFM.

The NTB provides Australian and international researchers with clinically and neuro-pathologically well-characterised TBI post mortem human CNS tissues on which they can conduct research into neurotrauma.

Website: <http://www.nnf.com.au/platforms/nntrc>

Contact: David O'Reilly, Research Coordinator Neurotrauma Tissue/Fluid Bank, National Trauma Research Institute, Level 4 Burnet Tower, The Alfred Hospital, Melbourne Vic 3004 Phone: (03) 9076 8790 ; Fax: (03) 9076 8811 Email: [D.OReilly@alfred.org.au](mailto:D.OReilly@alfred.org.au)

## **Prizes and Awards to Australian and New Zealand Neuroscientists**

Congratulations to Professor Trevor Kilpatrick from the Centre for Neuroscience, University of Melbourne and the Howard Florey Institute for being awarded the 2008 Eureka Prize for Medical Research. Congratulations also to Dr. Maurice Curtis from the University of Auckland who was awarded the Royal Society of NZ Hamilton Prize, which is awarded annually for the encouragement of beginners in scientific or technological research in New Zealand or in the islands of the South Pacific Ocean.

## **TIMETABLE OF MEETINGS AND COURSES OF INTEREST TO MEMBERS**

**4th Australian Health & Medical Research (AH & MR) Congress**, 16-21 November 2008, Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre. Information: <http://www.ahmrcongress.org.au/> or Maree Overall (mo@asnevents.net.au)

**Trauma Research and Clinical Management Conference**, 21-22 November 2008, Sofitel Hotel, Melbourne, Australia. Further information: [www.traumamelbourne.com.au](http://www.traumamelbourne.com.au)

**Annual Scientific Meeting of the Huntington's Research Group of Victoria (HRGV)** in conjunction with Huntington's Victoria. Friday 5 December 2008, 9.00am-5.15pm. Howard Florey Institute Lecture Theatre, Ground Floor, University of Melbourne, Royal Parade, Parkville (Gate 11). The one-day scientific meeting will present information on recent genetic developments, genetic counselling, pathogenesis, neuroimaging, cognitive and social factors, clinical aspects, management and treatment. Abstract Submission by Friday 17 October, 2008. For further information contact [info@ahda.com.au](mailto:info@ahda.com.au).

**3rd FAONS Symposium 2008**, Bangkok, 4-6 December 2008. The Federation of Asian and Oceanian Neurosciences Societies (FAONS) will be holding the 3rd FAONS Symposium 2008 in Bangkok from 4-6 December, in conjunction with the Thai Neuroscience Society. Abstract Submission and Early Registration close on 30 September 2008 and can be made through the Symposium's website at [www.faons2008.com](http://www.faons2008.com)

**5th International Meeting "Steroids and Nervous System"** February 13-18, 2009, Torino, Italy. <http://www.dafml.unito.it/anatomy/panzica/neurosteroids/SNS09/HOME.html>

**5th Annual Update Symposium Series on Clinical Neurology and Neurophysiology**, Feb 16-17th 2009 Tel Aviv, Israel. Abstract deadline November 15th. Further information: [www.neurophysiology-symposium.com](http://www.neurophysiology-symposium.com)

**Restauracion Neurologica 2009**. Havana Cuba, 9-13 March 2009. Topics will cover the spectrum of Restorative Neurology from Basic Neuroscience, Neurology, Neurosurgery, Nursing, Rehabilitation. Further information: <http://192.168.1.2/ciren/home.htm>

**9th International Conference on Alzheimer's and Parkinson's Diseases**. Prague, Czech Republic, March 11-15, 2009. For more information and to receive the latest updates about the congress please visit [www.kenes.com/adpd/2009](http://www.kenes.com/adpd/2009)

**11th International Neuroscience Winter Conference** Sölden, Austria, March 31st – April 4th, 2009 – Central Spa Hotel (<http://inwc.sambax.com>)

**IV Neurotoxicity Society Meeting: Neurochemical mechanisms of neurodegenerative disorders**. 24-26 April 2009, Arica, Chile. <http://nts.med.uchile.cl/NS/>

**14th International Conference of the Association of Psychology & Psychiatry for Adults & Children (A.P.P.A.C.)**, May 5 -8, 2009 at the Athens Hilton Hotel, in Greece. The theme of the Conference is: "Neuropsychiatric, Psychological and Social Developments in a Globalised World". For more information contact The A.P.P.A.C. Secretariat [appachellas@yahoo.gr](mailto:appachellas@yahoo.gr)

**10th European Congress of Stereology and Image Analysis**, Università Degli Studi Di Milan, Italy, 22-29 June 2009. Further information: <http://ecs10.mat.unimi.it/>

**XXIVth International Symposium on Cerebral Blood Flow, Metabolism and Function & IXth International Conference on Quantification of Brain Function with PET**, Chicago, U.S. June 29- July 3, 2009. - <http://www.kenes.com/brain>

**International Society for Autonomic Neuroscience (ISAN)**, Sydney, Australia, 1-4 September 2009. Further information: [Vaughan Macefield v.macefield@uws.edu.au](mailto:Vaughan.Macefield@uws.edu.au) [mailto:v.macefield@uws.edu.au](mailto:mailto:v.macefield@uws.edu.au)

## **DONATIONS TO ANS RESEARCH (GIFT) FUND**

Members are reminded that donations to the ANS Research (Gift) Fund are tax deductible. If you wish to make a donation, please email the ANS Treasurer, Prof Jackie Phillips at: [j.k.phillips@murdoch.edu.au](mailto:j.k.phillips@murdoch.edu.au) All donations, regardless of amount, are most welcome.

## **ANS POLICY ON REQUESTS FOR PUBLICITY VIA EMAIL CIRCULATION**

The standing policy of the ANS is to minimize email traffic to members. This is done by bundling brief announcements or news which needs to be disseminated between print newsletters into (at most) monthly plain text email circulars. Attachments are not sent with email to members, with very few exceptions (such as our core business of an annual Society meeting). This is to reduce both the risk of virus transmission via attachments received from outside sources, and the volume (ie. cost) of email traffic through University or Institute based servers. Meetings and other significant announcements (such as job vacancies) will also receive Society publicity, via links to appropriate web pages from the ANS web site, and by subsequent inclusion into the next print ANS newsletter when appropriate. Requests for these publicity services should be directed either to the Secretary, or to Sally Jay Conferences.

## **ANS WEBSITE AND NEWSLETTER**

The ANS website is on-line at <http://www.ans.org.au/>. Members are encouraged to regularly check the website for updated information on positions vacant, travel awards and national and international neuroscience meetings. While announcements and news items cannot always be broadcasted as an email to ANS members, they are promptly loaded on the ANS website and so it is always worth a regular check of the news page. Current and recent newsletters are available to be downloaded in PDF format and information about ANS, including the current list of council members, historical facts and how to apply for ANS Awards and Prizes is readily available. For further information or requests to place announcements on the ANS website, please contact Ann Turnley (email [turnley@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:turnley@unimelb.edu.au), phone 03 8344 3981). Similarly, we are very happy to include information or news items in the ANS newsletter. Anticipated copy deadlines are set out below. Material for inclusion can be topics for discussion, meeting announcements, meeting reports, prizes and awards received by ANS members, obituaries, and any other items of potential interest to members of our society.

## **DEADLINES FOR FUTURE NEWSLETTERS**

December 2008 Newsletter: 24 November 2008

### **Address and contact details for the ANS secretariat:**

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### **Authorized by Ann Turnley**

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