ANS STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2028_approved ANS Council, 27 Feb 2024

ANS Vision

To lead and foster excellence in neuroscience research, education and the application of discovery for the benefit of society.

ANS Mission Statement

ANS aims to be the peak body for neuroscience in Australia and New Zealand, and to be internationally recognised as the leading regional body for neuroscience.

ANS creates opportunities for neuroscience researchers and educators and serves the intellectual and operational needs of its members.

ANS fosters diversity, equity and inclusion, and aims to provide a welcoming, safe, and enjoyable environment at all ANS activities.

ANS Values:

- **Excellence:** ANS supports excellence in neuroscience research and education, leading to new knowledge and societal benefits.
- **Integrity and ethics:** The highest levels of ethical conduct and integrity are fundamental to ANS and its members.
- **Openness:** ANS promotes transparency and accessibility of knowledge, and supports sharing of data, resources and ideas to enhance discovery, innovation and translation.
- **Inclusiveness:** ANS represents researchers, clinicians, engineers, educators and those involved in the pursuit of knowledge about the brain and nervous system, across all career stages.
- **Creativity:** ANS values the creative endeavour of neuroscience research and the powerful role creative thinking plays in delivering our vision.
- **Representation:** By representing all areas of brain and nervous system research, education and translation, ANS provides expert opinion, leadership and advice to Government, funding bodies and the wider community.

ANS Objectives

As per the ANS Constitution (9 December 2020):

"The primary object of the Society shall be the advancement of the neurosciences by facilitating the dissemination of information pertaining to neuroscience. This object shall be achieved by conducting meetings, lectures and courses, by supporting public outreach activities, and by engaging in the advocacy and promotion of neuroscience for the benefit of the Society's Members.

An additional object is the actual undertaking of research for the benefit of Australia and New Zealand by clarifying the actions of the nervous system and how diseases of the nervous system can be treated. This may take the form of presenting novel data at workshops and / or the publishing of novel data generated by Members of the Society".

These intersecting objectives – ***knowledge sharing***, ***research excellence***, and ***promotion and advocacy*** – are reflected in the following Goals. A primary measure to track progress against each Goal will be a survey of members, proposed for Year 3 (2026).

Goal 1: To promote excellence in Australasian neuroscience.

Mechanisms:

- Recognise excellence in neuroscience research and education by promoting high quality presentations at the Annual Scientific Meeting, training initiatives such as ACAN, and through ANS awards and honours.
- Review the current ANS awards and honours to ensure parity across areas and potential gaps.
- Promote our neuroscience research and education through support of nominations for prizes and awards sponsored by other organisations, including government agencies.
- Strengthen relationships with other regional neuroscience societies.
- Support the work of the ANS Animals in Research Committee and Society members to advocate for the ethical use of animals in research, and to support education on the use of animals in research.

Measures:

- Increased number of awards and honours presented at the ANS Annual Scientific Meeting.
- Increased number of neuroscientists who are members of learned academies and recipients of major Australasian and international prizes and awards.
- Increased reciprocal input to meetings and other annual activities of regional neuroscience societies.
- Greater public awareness of the role of animal experimentation in research discovery and translation and the importance of open discussions about this role.

Goal 2: To promote equity and diversity within the Society and across all our activities and functions.

Mechanisms:

- Ensure equity and diversity are fully embedded in all Society activities and functions, including opportunities for participation in the Annual Scientific Meeting and other ANS activities, membership of ANS Council and Committees, and recognition by Honours and Awards.
- Review Position Descriptions for all ANS Council and Committee roles, Terms of Reference for ANS Committees and assessment processes/criteria for ANS Honours and Awards to ensure appropriate reflection of equity and diversity.

Measures:

- Demonstrate inclusiveness across our membership and opportunities across all career stages, in all ANS activities and functions.

Goal 3: To develop resources and structures to increase resilience of ANS, by building capacity for continuity and opportunities for growth of our activities and outcomes.

Mechanisms:

- Regularly appraise acute and longer-term risks to the Society and changes in the sponsorship landscape.
- Develop new strategies to generate revenue for supporting the Society's activities and functions, including ANS Committee and State/Regional initiatives. This should include seeking sponsorship opportunities across the year.
- Undertake substantial new initiatives only after establishing new targeted sponsorship to enable their continued support for at least 3 years.
- Aspire to represent all areas of brain and nervous system research, translation and education, at all career stages.

- Review the need for an ANS Sponsorship Committee, e.g., to aggregate knowledge of existing targeted sponsorship (sponsors of Annual Scientific Meeting, ACAN) and build pan-Society resources.

Measures:

- Increased annual membership base and participation in the Annual Scientific Meeting, across all career stages and areas of neuroscience activity.
- Increased revenue to support ongoing annual ANS functions and activities without impacting significantly on membership fees or meeting registration fees.
- Reduced financial risk associated with annual rotation of the ANS Annual Scientific Meeting between host cities, while enabling regular inclusion of NZ in the ANS Annual Scientific Meeting calendar.
- Greater capacity to sustain current activities and functions if significant external challenges arise (e.g., national/global economic or public health challenges).

Goal 4: To create a high-quality, financially sustainable, Annual Scientific Meeting that attracts increased delegate numbers.

Mechanism:

- Establish an Annual Scientific Meeting calendar at least two years in advance, to ensure availability of high quality international plenary speakers, provide the Local Organising Committee with sufficient time and resources for planning, maximise sponsorship and optimise negotiations relating to selection of conference venue.
- Analyse trends in profit/loss from Annual Scientific Meetings to inform choices of venue, program and member support in future meetings to ensure financially sustainable meetings that generate modest surpluses that can provide support for ongoing and future ANS activities.
- Develop innovative strategies to encompass and sustain a broad representation of neuroscience at the Annual Scientific Meeting, including development of joint or intersecting conference programs, symposia or satellite meetings.
- Review the roles of the Conference Executive Chair, Program Committee and LOC, to optimise sharing of corporate knowledge (to ensure the meeting meets the Society's overall requirements for the Annual Scientific Meeting program and is financially viable for the Society and participants) while encouraging each LOC to provide creative input to the scientific and social components of the meeting.
- Review the final report provided by each LOC. This will include: the final program (including file of abstracts), registration data, free presentations in each theme, responses from participant survey, final budget outcomes and any new understanding of threats/opportunities relevant to future conferences.

Measures:

- Stable trend of increasing attendance at the Annual Scientific Meeting. This assessment will take into account the impact of more expensive travel costs or reduced sponsorship opportunities associated with some locations or other national/global factors influencing travel.
- Increased participation in the Annual Scientific Meeting across areas of expertise and career stages.
- Consistent and vibrant student and ECR participation in all aspects of the Annual Scientific Meeting.
- Increased number of joint sessions or events with related Societies, associated with the ANS Annual Scientific Meeting.
- ANS Annual Scientific Meetings to generate modest surpluses that can provide support for ongoing and future ANS activities.

Goal 5: To provide year-round benefits for members by running high quality, typically state-based events, educational and training activities, in addition to the Annual Scientific Meeting.

Mechanism:

- Provide opportunities for ANS members to attend events throughout the year, as initiated by ANS State/Regional representatives and ANS Committees and supported by ANS funds. Events may be focused on research, neuroscience teaching (Universities), research training or career development for early- and mid-career ANS members.
- Support the Australasian Course in Advanced Neuroscience (ACAN) and Australasian Brain Bee Challenge (ABBC).
- Promote events, educational and training activities on ANS website, monthly Bulletin, Newsletter and ANS social media.

Measures:

- Increased number of local events run by ANS members.
- Increased member satisfaction related to year-round benefits.
- Increased number of neuroscience teaching-focused activities for ANS members.
- Early- and mid-career researchers feel appropriately supported by the Society.
- Recognition of ACAN as a world-leading neuroscience research training course.
- Successful state and regional ABBC competitions each year, culminating in the finals being hosted at the ANS Annual Scientific Meeting.