November 2025

Australasian Neuroscience Society

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Australasian Neuroscience Society

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Understanding Dementia and Preventing Dementia MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) offered by the Wicking Dementia Research and Education Centre, University of Tasmania

Notifications

Become an ANS member or student member!
Please join us by becoming a Member of ANS.
You can join online at any time!
https://tas.currinda.com/register/organisation/172

Check out our website and follow updates on the ANS Twitter, Bluesky and Linkedin accounts.

https://www.ans.org.au

https://twitter.com/AusNeuroSoc

https://bsky.app/profile/ausneurosoc.bsky.social

https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8362021/

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Message from the President

I hope you are well at this incredibly busy time of year. As I write this report, I am about to deliver my final undergraduate lecture of the year, and have just received a pile of Honours theses for marking. And, of course, there is the usual backlog of scientific manuscripts to prepare for submission. It never ends!

Professor Jason Mattingley

President, ANS

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I hope, like me, you have now registered for the 2025 ANS Annual Scientific Meeting, which will be held at the Hotel Grand Chancellor in Hobart from 30 November to 2 December. I encourage you to visit the conference website, where you will find a list of this year's plenary and symposium speakers, as well as a preliminary program. As a reminder, this year's plenary speakers include Marina Mikhaylova (Humboldt University), Alex Fornito (Monash University), Miriam Matamales (University of New South Wales), Peter Crack (University of Melbourne), and Melinda Fitzgerald (Curtin University). To quote from the conference website:

> *"If you have not previously visited Tasmania or it has been some time since your last visit, you will find Hobart to be a charming city with rich history, unique wildlife, and breathtaking landscapes."*

In other exciting news, I am pleased to announce that the ANS Executive and Council recently approved a proposal for ANS to hold its 2026 Annual Scientific Meeting jointly with the Australasian Cognitive Neuroscience Society (ACNS) and Biological Psychiatry Australia (BPA). The combined meeting, which will take place in Sydney from 29 November – 2 December, will offer an opportunity for members with closely allied interests to come together and share their discoveries, in addition to affording valuable networking opportunities.

I am also pleased to announce that Lezanne Ooi (University of Wollongong) has been confirmed as Conference Executive Chair for the 2026 combined scientific meeting. Natalie Matosin (University of Sydney) will act as Chair of the Local Organising Committee, which will also include representatives from ACNS and BPA. Please make a note of the dates in your diary, as this promises to be a very special meeting.

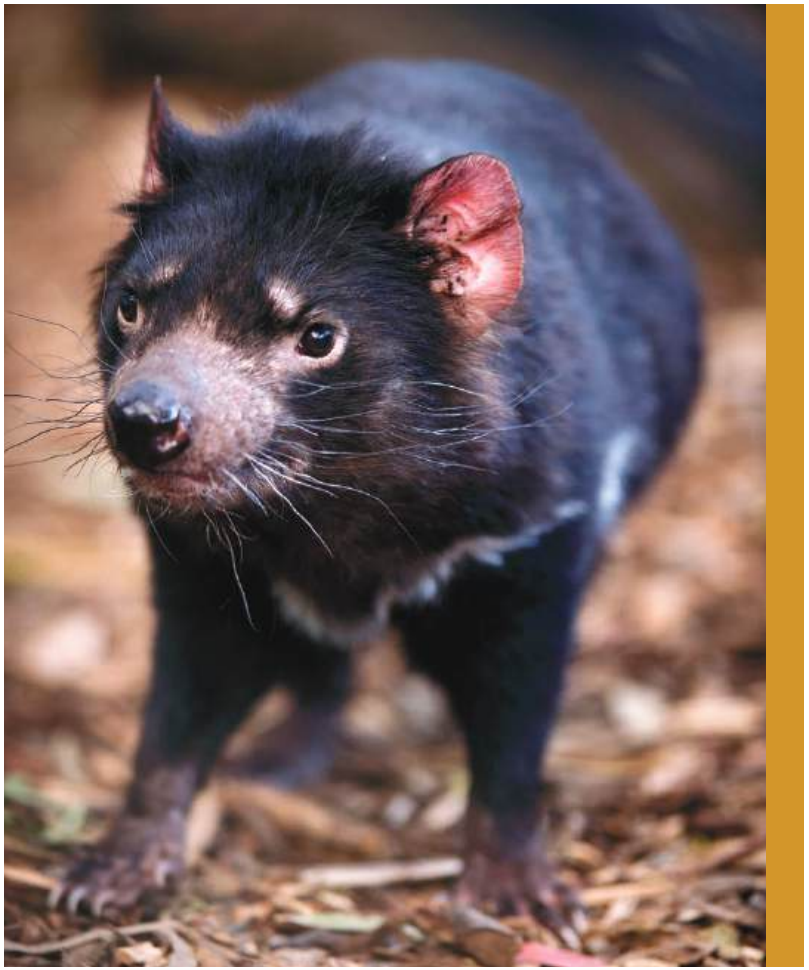
We are also keen to hear from individuals and groups who are interested in hosting the ANS Annual Scientific Meeting in 2027 and 2028. Please feel free to get in touch with me or any other member of ANS Executive Committee if you would like more information. It's never too early to start planning!

Finally, I am delighted to take this opportunity to announce the 2025 winners of the Finkel Foundation Travelling Fellowships. These awards are funded by a generous donation from the A&E Finkel Foundation in 2024. Valued at up to $50,000 each, the aim of the Fellowships is to provide career development opportunities for early and mid-career ANS Members based in Australia or New Zealand by supporting a "mini-sabbatical" to a host laboratory with world-leading expertise relevant to development of brain-computer interfaces or related areas of innovative neurotechnology. This year's recipients

(Message from the President ... continued)

of the Finkel Foundation Travelling Fellowship are Dr Christina Mo (Florey Institute, University of Melbourne), Dr Barbora Fulopova (Queensland Brain Institute, University of Queensland) and Dr Jingjing You (University of Sydney). If you missed the deadline this year, please consider applying in 2026.

My very best wishes for the busy weeks ahead, and I look forward to seeing you at the ANS Annual Scientific Meeting in Hobart!



The Tasmanian Devil, a true local in Tasmania.
Annual Scientific Meeting to be held in Hobart from 30 November – 3 December 2025

The ANS 2025 Scientific Meeting: Diversifying the Network

We are excited to welcome members of the ANS and wider Australasian neuroscience community to Hobart, Tasmania for the annual scientific meeting. With symposia ranging from 'Circuit neuroscience', to 'Enhancing indigenous inclusion, support and participation in neuroscience research' and 'Modelling neurodegenerative diseases in vitro' this year's conference will showcase the exceptional work of Australasian researchers across all career stages.

Find out more at https://www.ans.org.au/ans-asm

Tasmania is a destination full of natural wonders, from pristine beaches to rugged mountains it's the perfect place to unwind after the conference. Stay a little longer and explore Hobart's world-class art at MONA or the world-famous crystal-clear waters of Freycinet National Park.

Finally, thank you to this year's local organising committee, co-chaired by Professor Brad Southerland and Associate Professor Jenna Ziebell. The team has worked tirelessly to fulfill their commitment to fostering inclusion in research across Australasia, bridging diverse fields of neuroscience and expanding the horizons of our collective knowledge.

Hobart 2025 LOC
Back row (L-R): Adele Woodhouse, James Crane, Garry Morris, Jessica Fletcher, Bryony Thorne.
Front row (L-R): Sharn Perry, Brad Southerland, Jenna Ziebell, Emily Garratt

The ANS 2025 Scientific Meeting: Networking Function

ANS2025 Scentific Meeting Networking Function

The social highlight of the conference!

The ANS networking function will take place at Crowne Plaza Hobart from 7pm - 11pm Tuesday 2nd December. Situated within the Hobart CBD, with the picturesque backdrop of Kunanyi (Mount Wellington), divulge in freshly prepared delights, generous platters and delicious drinks. The function will be soundtracked by an acoustic duo, facilitating the perfect setting for mingle with fellow delegates, speakers and sponsors. As night falls, a live band will takeover, guaranteed to get you on the dancefloor. This night is not to be missed!

Tickets will be available at the registration desk or can be added to your online registration. $100 for students, $150 for all other tickets.

Secretary's Message

As we look ahead to the 2025 ANS Conference in Hobart, excitement is already building!

Dr Matilde Balbi

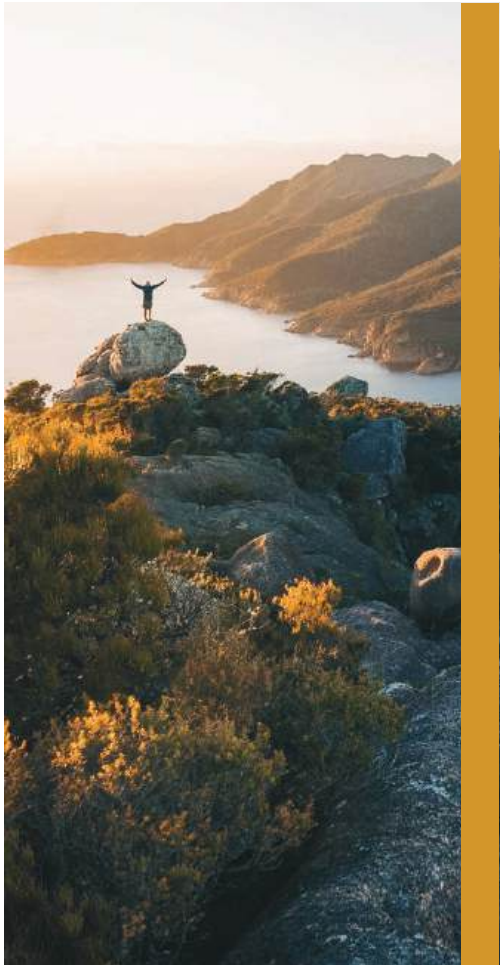
Secretary, ANS
m.balbi@uq.edu.au

This year, we received an overwhelming number of applications for our annual ANS Awards, reflecting the exceptional calibre and creativity of neuroscience research across Australasia. The entire ANS Council was involved in assessing the applications, and I was truly impressed, and humbled, by the remarkable achievements of our members at all career stages.

The winners of this year's A.W. Campbell and Nina Kondelos Awards will be presenting their research at the Hobart meeting, and we look forward to celebrating all of our award recipients during the meeting. It's always inspiring to see the breadth and impact of the work being done by our community.

I warmly invite everyone to attend the Annual General Meeting (AGM) where we will officially announce all award winners, share society updates, and more details of the 2026 ANS Conference, including the line-up of plenary speakers and further details about what promises to be a very special 2026 meeting. The AGM is also a great opportunity to hear about new award initiatives being developed to further recognise excellence and engagement within our society.

I look forward to seeing many of you in Hobart, to connect, celebrate, and continue shaping the vibrant future of neuroscience.



Wineglass Bay, Tasmania.
Annual Scientific Meeting to be held in Hobart from 30 November – 3 December 2025

November 2025

New Leadership for ACAN: Welcoming Dr Christina Mo and A/Prof Robyn Brown as Co-Directors

The Australasian Course in Advanced Neuroscience (ACAN) is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr Christina Mo (the Florey Institute) and A/Prof Robyn Brown (University of Melbourne) as Co-directors. Their leadership brings together complementary strengths in systems neuroscience, behavioural research, and institutional engagement — reinforcing ACAN's mission to deliver world-class neuroscience training across Australasia.

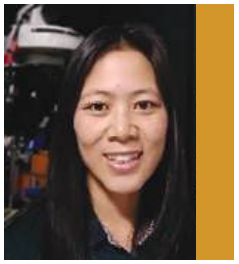
Dr Christina Mo:
Leading Theme 2 – Networks and Systems

Dr Christina Mo is a circuit and systems neuroscientist whose research explores how brain circuits support perception and decision-making. After completing her undergraduate and Honours studies at the University of Western Australia, Christina undertook a PhD at the Florey Institute, where she investigated behavioural changes in Huntington's disease models.

Christina then undertook postdoctoral training at the University of Chicago in the lab of Professor S. Murray Sherman, where she combined patch-clamp electrophysiology and two-photon imaging to investigate cortico-thalamic pathways involved in perceptual decisions.

In 2023, Christina established her independent laboratory at the Florey Institute, supported by an NHMRC Ideas Grant and early career fellowship. Her team uses trans-synaptic tracing, head-fixed behaviour, miniscope imaging, optogenetics, and computational modelling to study the neural basis of decision-making. Her work has appeared in top journals including Journal of Neuroscience, PNAS and Nature Communications.

As ACAN Co-director, Christina will lead Theme 2: Networks & Systems, working alongside Dr John Power to deliver immersive training in systems neuroscience. She is a strong advocate for ACAN's role in shaping the next generation of researchers and is committed to fostering a collaborative and inclusive learning environment.



Dr Christina Mo,
The Florey Institute

The Mo's Laboratory

(New Leadership for ACAN: ... continued)

A/Prof Robyn Brown:
Coordinating Institutional Support

A/Prof Robyn Brown is a behavioural neuroscientist and Group Leader in the Department of Biochemistry and Pharmacology at the University of Melbourne. Her research focuses on the biological mechanisms underlying motivated behaviours, including addiction and eating disorders. Robyn's lab uses a multidisciplinary approach that spans behavioural pharmacology, electrophysiology, fibre photometry, chemogenetics, and transgenic models.

She completed her PhD at the Monash Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences and received a Sir Keith Murdoch Fellowship to train in the United States with Dr Peter Kalivas, a leading figure in addiction research. During this time, she began exploring the shared neural mechanisms between drug addiction and overeating – a theme that continues to shape her research program.

Robyn has received multiple fellowships and awards, including the NHMRC Peter Doherty Fellowship, ARC DECRA, and the A.W. Campbell Award for outstanding neuroscience research. Her work has been featured in top journals such as Nature, Nature Neuroscience, JAMA Psychiatry, and Biological Psychiatry, and has attracted significant public interest, including national media coverage of her research on stress-related eating.

As ACAN Co-director, Robyn will be responsible for coordinating institutional support and funding across Australasia. Her leadership will help strengthen ACAN's partnerships with universities and research institutes, ensuring the course remains accessible and sustainable for future cohorts.

Together, Christina and Robyn bring a dynamic and forward-thinking approach to ACAN leadership. Their combined expertise and enthusiasm will help ensure the course continues to thrive as a cornerstone of neuroscience training in our region.

We warmly welcome them to the ACAN leadership team and look forward to the exciting developments ahead.

A/Prof Robyn Brown,
The University of Melbourne

The Brown's Laboratory

Neuroscience at the Beach

The 2025 edition of the annual Kioloa Neuroscience Colloquium once again returned to ANU's Kioloa Coastal Campus near Batemans Bay over the weekend of the 19th to 21st of September. Hosted by ANU's Eccles Institute of Neuroscience and organised by Prof. John Bekkers, the meeting featured neuroscientists from Canberra, Sydney, Newcastle and Brisbane all in one place with over 60 people gathered for a jam-packed weekend of neuroscience at the beach.

First thing Saturday morning, A/Prof Nathalie Dehorter (QBI & ANU) kicked off the meeting with a fascinating plenary lecture detailing work done to understand brain disorders arising from both developmental and degenerative origins. Several short talk sessions followed, highlighting the quality work being done by neuroscientists in the region. Most of these talks were given by PhD students who presented their work on a broad range of topics ranging from sensory coding to the molecular profiling of multiple sclerosis and retinal pathologies. These sessions were punctuated by morning tea and lunch, providing ample opportunity for discussion with speakers and peers.

After a busy morning, attendees were given a much-deserved break to enjoy the spring sunshine of their coastal locale. Some more adventurous individuals took the opportunity to brave the chilly waters for a swim in the ocean, while others used the time to recharge with a nap before the evening sessions.

These kicked off with a new addition to this year's meeting, a '3-minute thesis' style session exclusively featuring senior academics, armed only with a whiteboard and their wits against the clock. A number of entertaining and chaotic talks followed, featuring many artistic drawings of mice and creative attempts by some speakers to get around the time limit.

Afterward there was a relaxed poster session over drinks, with about a dozen posters presented, generating lots of stimulating conversations to tide everyone over until dinner. With the sun down and the stars out, many attendees migrated to the bonfire to share a meal and keep the conversations going. Some people were tempted away from the fire's warmth by the promise of bioluminescence in the ocean, before all eventually retired to bed up the hill, many being startled on their way by the ever-present kangaroos lurking in the dark.

Things kicked off bright and early again the next morning with another round of captivating short talks highlighting even more top-quality neuroscience. Once these concluded, attendees were asked to vote for their favourite student-presented talk. After a close-run tally, Alyssa Baldicano from the University of Sydney won for her talk detailing

(Neuroscience at the Beach ... continued)

the diversity of amacrine cells in the human retina. With this done, attendees gathered once more outside for a group photo to round out the meeting. Farewells were made over a quick lunch before heading home with renewed enthusiasm for neuroscience, as well as many new friends and collaborators.

The organisers thank ANS, ANU and the University of Newcastle for providing the funding that helped to make Kioloa 2025 such an exceptional event.

We look forward to an even more exciting Kioloa 2026.

Josh Davies

PhD student, Eccles Institute of Neuroscience (ANU) and Queensland Brain Institute (UQ)

Attendees gathered outside for a group photo to round out the meeting.

Victorian Regional Student Committee Event: Diagnosing “Nimbot”

The Victorian region recently hosted a fun and imaginative Student Committee event — a creative competition to diagnose “Nimbot”.

“Nimbot” is an alien presenting with neurocognitive symptoms. The session began with an overview of our society, the annual conference, and the diverse research areas showcased each year. Participants then presented their innovative research designs, species considerations, and fictional diagnoses.

While the turnout was small, attendees shared that they thoroughly enjoyed the event and appreciated the chance to take a lighthearted break from their PhD work. Winners received $50 and $25 gift cards, and everyone enjoyed pizza and drinks to celebrate a successful evening.

Anne Li

ANS Student Committee Chair

November 2025

Free online education to understand Dementia, Traumatic Brain Injury, Parkinson's and Motor Neuron Disease.

Dementia is becoming one of the most pressing public health challenges, the Understanding Dementia and Preventing Dementia MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) offered by the Wicking Dementia Research and Education Centre, University of Tasmania are essential resources for everyone — regardless of age, background, or profession.

With more than 55 million people worldwide living with the disease, and with numbers expected to rise dramatically in the coming decades, there is an increasing need for widespread understanding, empathy, and action. The dementia MOOCs are designed to meet that need by equipping individuals with the knowledge and tools to better understand, support, and protect brain health. They are fully online, available on demand, and they are completely free. In 2025, both dementia MOOCs were updated and enriched with new content, expert interviews, and powerful lived experiences, and two new MOOCs that focus on Parkinson's disease and Motor Neurone Disease, were offered for the first time.

Understanding Dementia MOOC (UD MOOC): The Human Experience

The **UD MOOC** takes learners on a journey from the biology of the brain to the lived realities of people living with dementia and takes about 21 hours to complete. Spread across four modules of learning, it starts with the brain, explaining how dementia affects different parts of the brain and how it changes over time. Subsequent modules cover 'signs, symptoms and risks', 'caring for people with dementia', and 'being and belonging with dementia'. The curriculum is evidence-based, and draws on expertise of global leaders, including an array of Australian clinicians and researchers. Learning occurs largely via video interviews with carers, clinicians, and people living with dementia, offering authentic perspectives that deepen empathy. This is supported by animations, learning activities and links out to further online information.

Preventing Dementia MOOC (PD MOOC): Taking Control of Brain Health

The **PD MOOC** focuses on what we can do – individually and collectively – to reduce the risk of developing dementia. It explores the latest evidence on modifiable risk factors including physical activity and cardiovascular health, nutrition and diet, cognitive stimulation and lifelong learning, social engagement and mental wellbeing, sleep, alcohol use, and smoking. This 8-hour long course includes

(Free online education ... continued)

new research findings, interactive tools, and real-life stories that make prevention strategies relatable and actionable. It's a powerful reminder that while we can't change our genes, we can influence many aspects of our brain health through everyday choices. The renewed PD MOOC will be available early in 2026.

The **Understanding Traumatic Brain Injury MOOC** aims to raise awareness and build knowledge to reduce risk and improve management and rehabilitation outcomes for people who have experienced a traumatic brain injury (TBI). Over about 10 hours, it explores the causes and consequences of traumatic brain injury across the spectrum from mild (concussion), through to severe injuries, as well as at how and when injuries may occur across the lifespan and what life looks like when living with a TBI.

In 2025, we added two new MOOCS to our collection. The **Parkinson's MOOC** was developed in conjunction with the Menzies Institute for Medical Research (14 hours). Parkinson's disease is the fastest growing neurological condition in the world and the second most common after dementia. The **Motor Neurone Disease MOOC** starts with epidemiology and risk factors, disease processes, diagnosis and medical management and person-centred care (8 hours).

All of the Wicking Centre MOOCs are fully online, and completely free to access. They are designed for anyone who wants to understand more about these conditions, and how to support those living with the disease. Whether you're a person living with the disease, family member, friend, volunteer, health professional or simply a curious learner, these courses empower you to make a meaningful difference.

All of the MOOCs commence with a neuroscience focus, leading learners through each condition. The **Understanding Dementia MOOC** has been successfully embedded within several University of Tasmania degree programs, including the Diploma of Dementia Care, Bachelor of Paramedicine, Bachelor of Nursing, and a suite of postgraduate Allied Health courses. It is used in different ways in each course, with a range of assessment strategies to assure students learning.

How to Enrol

1. Visit the Wicking Dementia Centre website www.mooc.utas.edu.au
2. Click "Enrol in Course"
3. Create a free account or log in
4. Start learning at your own pace

Please contact alison.canty@utas.edu.au if you would like to discuss how these MOOCs could be embedded in courses at your university.

Understand Dementia, Traumatic Brain Injury, Parkinson's and Motor Neuron Disease: Enrol in a MOOC.

MOOC

Massive Open Online Courses

November 2025

ALBA Declaration-IBRO-ANS Hybrid Workshop Strategies and Leadership for embedding equity, diversity and inclusion at your Institute

For the final session of the From Declaration to Action series, ALBA and the Australasian Neuroscience Society (ANS) are partnering to deliver a unique hybrid event dedicated to embedding equity, diversity, inclusion (EDI), and wellbeing into the core of academic institutions.

Broadcast live from the ANS meeting in Hobart (Australia), the session will begin with an engaging EDI panel featuring neuroscientists and institutional leaders sharing hands-on experiences, lessons learned, and practical strategies for creating inclusive and supportive research and education environments. The panel discussion will highlight approaches that have successfully transformed organisational cultures and improved wellbeing across academic settings.

The livestreamed panel will be followed by an interactive online workshop offering participants the opportunity to exchange ideas, explore real-world case studies, and gain actionable tools to institutionalise EDI principles, develop accountability frameworks, and ensure the long-term sustainability of inclusion efforts.

Organised by the ALBA Network in partnership with the Australasian Neuroscience Society and supported by IBRO.

Prof Elizabeth Coulson, Head of the Department of Anatomy and Physiology, The University of Melbourne.

Dr. Saraid Billiards, CEO, Association of Australian Research Institutes.

A/Prof Nathalie Dehorter, Group Leader, Queensland Brain Institute, The University of Queensland. ALBA Ambassador.

Prof James Vickers, Director of the Wicking Dementia Research and Education Centre, The University of Tasmania.

A/Prof Michelle Rank, The University of Melbourne, ANS EDI Committee.

November 2025

Upcoming Events

International Basal Ganglia Society (IBAGS) Meeting
Dunedin, New Zealand
6-10 December 2025
https://ibags.global/conferences/

November 2025

Research in the News

New gene therapy trial for muscular dystrophy

https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en/news/2025/08/27/world-first-gene-therapy-trial-for-muscular-dystrophy.html

Shining light on how brain signals control stress

https://www.otago.ac.nz/news/newsroom/shining-light-on-how-brain-signals-control-stress

Towards the implentation of Indigenous data governance in neurogenomics research

https://www.nature.com/articles/s41593-025-02070-6

Call for ANS Communications Representative!

We are seeking an enthusiastic Communications Representative to join the Australian Neuroscience Society (ANS) team. This role offers an exciting opportunity to enhance your science communication skills, broaden your professional network, and play a key role in connecting and informing our vibrant neuroscience community. Responsibilities include managing social media channels, drafting engaging communications, and promoting ANS activities and initiatives. Ideal candidates will have strong written communication skills, creativity, and a keen interest in neuroscience outreach.

Join us in shaping effective communication strategies and showcasing neuroscience excellence across Australia!

Expressions of interest can be submitted via email to n.dehorter@uq.edu.au

November 2025

Communications

Is there information you would like included in our ANS Newsletter, published in our monthly online Bulletin, posted on our website, or Facebook page, or tweeted?

ANS has a Communications Committee to help members disseminate information and assist the Society in publicising its activities to Members and the public. This committee is Co-chaired by A/Prof Nathalie Dehorter (The University of Queensland) and A/Prof Marco Morsch (Macquarie University). It oversees the production of the newsletter and ensures that current content is posted on the ANS website, published in our monthly online Bulletin prepared by the ANS Secretariat, and disseminated through postings on the ANS Twitter account (by Dr Lila Landowski, University of Tasmania), the Bluesky account (by Dr Sean Coakley, University of Queensland) and LinkedIn (curated by Prof Thomas Fath, Macquarie University).

http://www.ans.org.au

https://twitter.com/AusNeuroSoc

https://bsky.app/profile/ausneurosoc.bsky.social

https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8362021/

If you have content for us, please email Nathalie Dehorter (n.dehorter@uq.edu.au).

Become an ANS member or student member!

Please join with your colleagues in Australia and New Zealand by becoming a Member of ANS. You can join online at any time!
https://tas.currinda.com/register/organisation/172

www.ans.org.au

Australasian **Neuroscience** Society

Policy

ANS Policy on Requests for Publicity via Email Circulation:
The policy of ANS is to minimise email traffic to members. Advertisements for meetings and other significant announcements such as job vacancies can be added to the website and included in the newsletter and monthly bulletin if appropriate. Such requests should be directed to the ANS Secretary.

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