

# australian science media centre

ANNUAL REVIEW
1 JULY 2013 TO 30 JUNE 2014

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Australian Science Media Centre Inc.
Annual Review 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014

Produced by: The Australian Science Media Centre

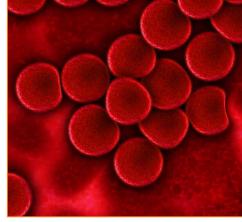
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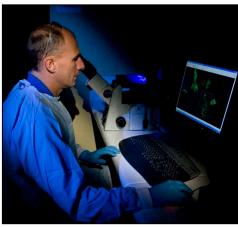
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Cover and final page image: 'Chaos in Orion', taken by the Spitzer Space Telescope. Credit: NASA  $\,$ 

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# THE YEAR IN REVIEW

The year got off to a cracking start with the launch of Scientists in Residence in July 2013 and the further development of our biggest undertaking since the Centre opened - the Science Media Exchange (Scimex.org).

The Scimex web portal is to be an engagement tool for scientists and journalists, a place where time poor journalists can pick up everything they need for a science story, make contact with media savvy experts, find multimedia, events and expert reaction to breaking news. It will also be a place where scientists can pitch story ideas and interact directly with the media. We're very excited about this new initiative and believe it will be a game changer for the science media landscape in the region.

Our other major project, Scientists in Residence, involves placing individual scientists within newsrooms to work alongside journalists for up to two weeks with the aim of creating new collaborative science content and building ongoing relationships. In 2013-14, 11 scientists were placed into a diverse array of media outlets including The Age, The Sydney Morning Herald, APN regional papers in Queensland. The Adelaide Advertiser, The

Courier Mail, the Ballarat Courier and ABC Radio/TV in Hobart. We are very grateful to Inspiring Australia for their support of both Scientists in Residence and Scimex.

These two major projects have been done whilst maintaining our traditional role of disseminating evidence-based information and informing debate. Some of the key issues handled by the AusSMC in 2013-14 include drug and alcohol abuse, climate change, sexually transmitted diseases, mental health and genetically modified foods. The Centre reacted to 96 controversial research articles and breaking news stories, held 34 national news briefings, took 2,580 inquiries from journalists, floated approximately 1,800 new science stories to the media and contributed to 16,271 news stories in 2013-14.

We end the year with a vote of thanks to the many organisations that support the AusSMC and make this important work possible. We also appreciate the efforts of AusSMC staff and Board members who have given more than 100% to the Centre throughout the year.



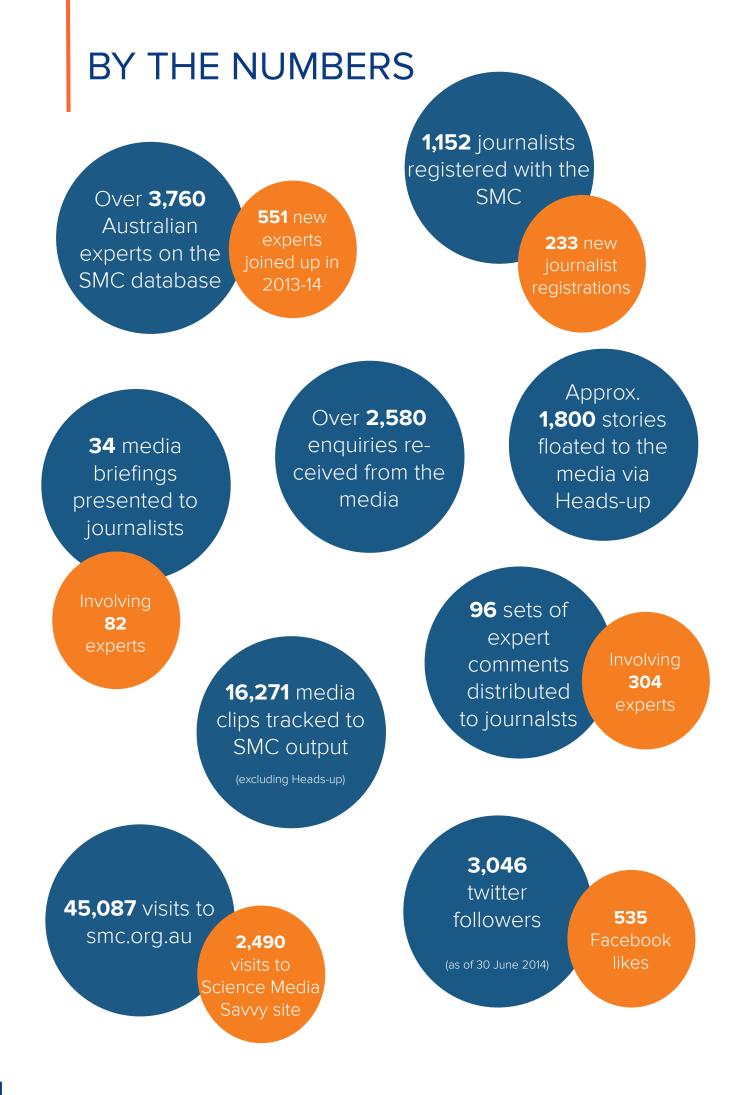






AusSMC briefing

Board members Michael Ellies and Jim Caroll



# LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

#### SCIENCE MEDIA SAVVY

In December 2013 we launched the most recent module for our scientist training website, Science Media Savvy (sciencemediasavvy.org). The module entitled 'Contentious science' covered areas including 'what makes science contentious?', 'difficult media moments', and interviews with high profile journalists and scientists recalling their experiences with divisive issues. The module was made available to supporters of the centre, and now makes up one of three complete modules on the site alongside 'using social media' and 'dealing with the media'.



#### **SCIJOURNO**

Development of a journalist training module, as part of the Federal Government's Inspiring Australia initiative, was completed in October 2013. The openaccess website called SciJourno was a collaborative project between the University of Queensland, Econnect Communications and the AusSMC, with advice from the University of Western Australia.

The site is designed to help journalists learn how to find the best scientific experts, what to ask, and how to best communicate what they find out, including through social media. It is hoped that SciJourno will be used by working journalists as well as post- and undergraduate journalism students and lecturers/ teachers of journalism courses.

The topics covered range from what makes a reliable scientific source, through to working with

#### Part A: Introducing stats and numbers

[With thanks to The Benchpress Project]

Numbers and statistics are in almost every news story. Whether you are a specialist health reporter, or writing a story on the latest crime rates, it is important to be savvy about numbers and defend yourself against misleading figures.

Watch this online briefing (25 minutes) produced by the Australian Science Media Centre.



EVENT FOR JOURNALISTS: Getting your head around numbers and stats from AusSMC on

big numbers and data, and what to do when science gets politicised. The six units include videos, practical exercises, tips/tools, links and resource lists. The AusSMC launched the site with an online briefing for working journalists on "Getting your head around...numbers and stats". The site can be viewed at <a href="https://www.scijourno.com.au">www.scijourno.com.au</a>.

#### SPONSORSHIP AND THE SCIENCE-MEDIA COLLABORATION

Support for the Centre continued to grow as we gained four new sponsors with AIA Insurance, Orica, Flinders University and the Federal Government's Inspiring Australia initiative all coming on board. Our Science-Media Collaboration also expanded with the National Computational Infrastructure (NCI), Southern Cross University, the ARC Centre for Excellence in Plant Cell Walls, NICTA and the CRC for Contamination Assessment and Remediation of the Environment (CRC CARE) joining as affiliates. As part of the Science-Media Collaboration we held an online briefing in October involving Wiley and Elsevier, giving media officers the chance to understand journal embargoes and how best to work with them.



#### SCIENTISTS IN RESIDENCE

The Scientists in Residence program, funded by the Federal Government's Inspiring Australia initiative, really took off this year with 11 scientists placed into newsrooms around the country. The aim of the program is to encourage new collaborative content that is created by scientists working together with journalists. Scientists learn about the media and establish ongoing relationships with the media outlet. Newsrooms learn more about an important area of science and gain an appreciation for scientific expertise in a news context. Another seven to ten scientists will be placed in the coming year, after which further support for the program will be sought from a variety of sources.

"Please accept my thanks... for including The Courier in the Scientist in Residence program. The Courier late last month published a special report with the assistance of Federation University's Elizabeth Temple which added significant depth and understanding to the issue of methamphetamine use in the Ballarat region ... I believe partnering with Dr Temple through the Scientist in Residence program was of benefit to our newsroom and, in turn, our readers."

Andrew Eales, editor, Ballarat Courier



"I learnt a lot - it was certainly challenging to work to a strict deadline and to try to fit a lot of info into a short word length (and without any jargon), but it was really interesting and enjoyable. There are some plans for future input from me in relation to the ice issue, which should be good. So, thank you for your roles in setting all of this up – it was certainly worth stepping out of my comfort zone to do something so different."

Dr Liz Temple, Federation University Australia



using the drug, adversely effecting treatment and increasing the

likelihood of relapse.

Normally, drug treatment consists



IT is said that the first step in addressing a problem is to admit

hat there is a problem. The next step is to work out the

#### **MEDIA TRAINING**

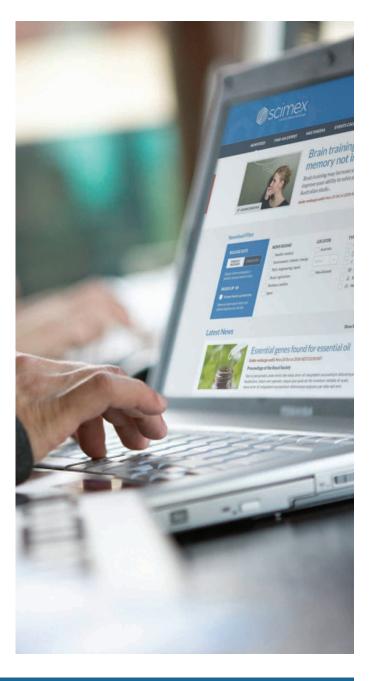
AusSMC media training introduces scientists at various stages of their careers to the mind-set and workings of modern media operations, including advice and exercises on making their own science more attractive for reporters, preparing for media interviews, working with institutional media teams and avoiding potential media pitfalls. Members of the media team provided media training for scientists at the inaugural South Australian Coastal Conference organised by the University of Adelaide, as well as The Australian Institute for Policy and Science, the Mental Health Cooperative Research Centre, The Defence Science and Technology Organisation (DSTO), and two workshops for the Bureau of Meteorology.

#### SCIMEX

The Science Media Exchange (Scimex) is a new tool for journalists and scientists that aims to increase the level of engagement between the two, often disparate groups and ultimately increase the quantity of science research in the mainstream media. Institutions from Australia and New Zealand will be able to upload their research news, story ideas, multimedia, events and expertise to the site for the media.

The project is a major initiative for the Centre and has involved running surveys to find out what journalists and scientists need, redesigning the Centre's own databases and working intensively with the web development team, Squiz. The portal is being developed in collaboration with the New Zealand Science Media Centre and so there has been a lot of discussion between the two centres and internal restructuring to make the collaboration possible.

During 2013-14 the main focus has been on the initial scoping exercises, the creation of a new SMC database and the build of the portal, in preperation for a launch in late 2014. One key area is how scientific journals will interact with the site and how much of their content will be included within the portal. The AusSMC has been in contact with some of the biggest journal publishers worldwide, explaining the Scimex concept and developing collaboration agreements.





# **MEDIA SNAPSHOT**

We organised 34 media briefings and sent out 96 sets of expert comments throughout the year. Below is a small collection of the stories we launched or contributed to.

#### Australia's role in DIY DNA - May 2014

The AusSMC worked with Macquarie University to help announce their role in a new international project to create the world's first synthetic yeast. To launch the Australian arm of the project, the AusSMC ran an embargoed briefing involving scientists from the US, UK and Australia to describe the project and its purpose. The launch recieved 223 media hits including The Australian, Herald Sun, AAP, The Guardian and the Sydney Morning Herald.



Joe and Lyndal with the DIY DNA briefing participants

#### Launch of Antarctic sea ice report - March 2014

The Antarctic Climate & Ecosystems Cooperative Research Centre asked us to help launch their Position Analysis on Antarctic sea ice and climate change in 2014. To coincide with an official launch in Hobart we held a news briefing for journalists where experts, including the report lead author, were able to present the latest science. The briefing successfully generated 473 media hits, half from overseas, including the Sydney Morning Herald, Radio National, Yahoo!7 and the New Zealand Herald.



ABC News 24

#### Technology and kids' brains? - October 2013

As the video game industry continues to grow and kids spend more and more hours immersed in screens and technology from television to iPhones, questions were being asked on the impact on kids' brains. Ahead of the Australian Council on Children and the Media conference, the AusSMC worked with Macquarie University to host a background briefing, where three experts looked into issues from violent video games to phone applications for young children. The briefing generated 679 media hits including ABC PM, The Advertiser and The Age

### Teen brains rewired

Generation distracted by multiple devices

Herald Sun

#### Australia's science literacy falls - July 2013

A national survey conducted by the Australian Academy of Science found that the science literacy of young Australian adults had fallen in the last three years, including the knowledge of whether humans lived with dinosaurs and how long it takes for the earth to revolve around the sun. The AusSMC worked with the Academy to help launch the survey results with an online briefing featuring the Academy's Secretary for Science Policy. Coverage was generated widely with 342 hits across TV, radio, print and online, including ABC News 24, Channel 10's The Project and the New York Times.



#### GM farmer wins court case - May 2014

The Western Australian Supreme Court in May dismissed claims by an organic farmer for damages over contamination from his neighbour's genetically-modified canola crop. We collected comments from agricultural experts and bioethicists and distributed them to journalists within the hour on the ruling. The comments were used in over 20 articles including ABC News 24, The Australian, Agence France Presse, Choice and Yahoo!.

#### Complementary medicine review - April 2014

The National Health and Medical Research Institute asked us to be involved in the release of their review into complementary medicine. We collected comments from independent experts and sent them to journalists under embargo to alert journalists to the report's release. The expert reaction generated 370 media hits including Today Tonight Adelaide, Sydney Morning Herald, The Daily Mail UK, West Australian and ABC News.

#### Hazelwood coal fire - February 2014

In February a fire broke out in the Hazelwood coal mine in the Victorian town of Morwell, with ash and smoke blanketing the town. We collected a number of comments on air quality and mining safety and distributed them to journalists. The comments were used in 74 media stories including The Australian, AAP, West Australian and the Times UK.

#### Chemical weapons attack in Syria – Aug 2013

In late August, images and footage were released reportedly showing a chemical weapons attack in Damascus, Syria. We collected an independent comment about the potential chemical used from an Australian expert and distributed it to journalists. The comments were used widely and generated 140 media hits including ABC News 24, The Project Channel 10, COSMOS, Perth Now, The Conversation and ABC Perth.







Choice



Business Insider Australia



The Australian



The Project (Channel 10)



# LIST OF MEDIA BRIEFINGS AND EXPERT REACTIONS

The following is a full list of the media briefings (blue) and expert reactions the Science Media Centre organised over the past year. The title in brackets shows the scientific journal the study was published in. Collectively they generated over 16,271 media hits in Australia and overseas.

**JUNE 2014** 

Potential breast cancer blood test (Genome Medicine)

Republication of Séralini GM maize study (Environmental Sciences Europe)

Schizophrenics' genes mean they're more likely to smoke pot (Molecular Psychiatry)

Great Barrier Reef and its resilience to climate change (Nature Communications)

Beating breast cancer: the harms and benefits of screening (BMJ)

Superfoods to fight the flu?

Science's impact on productivity – The Australian Council of Learned Academies report

**MAY 2014** 

GM farmer wins landmark court case in Western Australia

Man-made life - announcing Australia's role in DIY DNA

Friends of the Earth report on nanotechnology and food

Paedophiles' brains prefer children's faces (Biology Letters)

Federal Budget 2014-15

Why climate change is drying out Australia while Antarctica bucks the warming trend

World Health Organization report on air quality and health

National Commission of Audit's recommendations for scientific research

Total diet study

UNESCO draft decision on Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Status

**APRIL 2014** 

Making embryonic stem cells to treat diabetes (*Nature*)

Government releases white paper on Direct Action

IPCC Working Group 3 – Adaptation and mitigation

Cyclone Ita

Tamiflu turnaround (The Cochrane Library)

NHMRC releases review into complementary medicine

Is your unhealthy lifestyle giving you asthma

From mice to men – getting your head around clinical trials

Tsunami generated in Chile after 8.2 magnitude earthquake

Still no clear evidence for health benefits of vitamin D (BMJ)

**MARCH 2014** 

Climate impacts, adaptation & vulnerability: release of IPCC WG2 Summ for Policymakers People power – do it yourself climate modelling – Launch of Weather@Home Aus and NZ

Scientists detect echoes of the Big Bang

The impact of electronic media on kids (JAMA Pediatrics)

Why is there more ice in Antarctica? Launch of Antarctic sea ice report

Saturated fat not the bad guy

Diabetes a stroke risk for women (The Lancet)

UK comments: Atkins style diets shorten lifespans

State of the Climate 2014

**FEB 2014** 

Hazelwood coal fire health impacts

UK Comments: Western diet link to Alzheimer's (PNAS)

Health impacts of wind farms - release of NHMRC draft information paper

Food packaging chemicals a health risk? (*Jour of Epidemiology and Community Health*) Predicting depression in boys (*PNAS*)

Chemicals need better rules to prevent 'epidemic' of brain disorders (Lancet Neurology)

Climate extremes - here comes 'global weirding'

GM canola court case begins in WA

**Bushfires** 

Recent slowdown in warming explained by new study (Nature Climate Change)

Yoghurt may cut risk of type-2 diabetes by almost a third (*Diabetologia*)

WMO - 2013 among ten hottest years on record

Scombroid fish poisoning

UK Comments: New killer bird flu strain emerges

Launch of the World Cancer Report

**JAN 2014** 

Abbot Point dumping of dredge spoil approved

To make stem cells and a working heart, just add acid (Nature)

Let's talk about sex – getting the message out to teen girls

NOAA releases annual temperature data

Bushfires - are we getting better at surviving?

South-east Australia smoulders

Hottest year on record

**DEC 2013** 

Drunk and disorderly – The harms of alcohol

Australia tops world cancer charts

Cutting breast cancer risk in post-menopausal women (The Lancet)

The 10 weirdest science stories of 2013

Top 10 science stories 2013

Saving our skin – the hidden costs of skin health

Probiotics a potential treatment for autism? (Cell)

**NOV 2013** 

Indian Ocean links to extreme weather in SE Australia (Nature Geoscience)

UK Comments: The death of Fred Sanger

Still on the rise – release of the Global Carbon Budget for 2013

Chemical exposure linked to preterm birth risk (JAMA Pediatrics)

Launch of the Global Diabetes Atlas

WMO Provisional Statement on the Status of the Global Climate 2013

Typhoon Haiyan

Saving the ozone layer 'paused' global warming (Nature Geoscience)

WMO releases annual global gas emissions update

**OCT 2013** 

SARS may have originated in bats (*Nature*)

Getting your head around – Numbers and stats

Watching cochlear implants in action and updating an Aussie innovation

Chemical hazard found at the University of Technology Sydney

Shocking chlamydia levels in teens as young as 12 and other STIs on the rise

WHO declares air pollution to be cancer causing

NSW bushfires

Earthquake near Solomon Islands

The state of Australia's sexual health: HIV progress report

One in 2000 Brits carrying human form of 'mad cow disease' proteins (BMJ)

Earthquake in the Philippines

Rethinking the urban water cycle: Is it time Australia adopted toilet to tap recycling?

Vegie-chemical protects against radiation (PNAS)

Future of El Niño clearer than ever before (Nature)

Antarctic research derailed by US shutdown

Earthquake near Sydney

IPCC – What hasn't been reported and why the models generated such confidence

Designer baby patent leaves scientists feeling uneasy (Genetics in Medicine)

What is technology doing to kids' brains?

**SEP 2014** 

IPCC Report - Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis

IPCC release the latest news on climate change – IPCC AR5 WG1 Report release

IPCC Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) - the process behind the report

Jaw dropping fossil discovery (Nature)

Tony Abbott's new cabinet may not include a Science Minister

Did the IPCC get it wrong?

Chemical contamination – threatening our next generation

Stem cells re-set inside mice (*Nature*) Coalition to reprioritise away from "futile research" The major political parties' broadband policies How does political polling work?

#### **AUGUST 2014**

Scientists grow 'brain-like' organ using human stem cells (Nature)

Why global warming has 'paused' (Nature)

Global impact of mental disorders and illicit drug use (The Lancet)

Screening test for ovarian cancer developed (Cancer)

Alleged chemical weapons attack in Syria

Ocean acidification disturbing sea creatures (Nature Climate Change)

The political parties' climate change policies

UK Comments: Fukushima water leak

Kevin Rudd announces \$250m fund for regenerative medicine

UK Comments: Predicting suicide (Molecular Psychiatry)

Earthquake in Wellington, New Zealand NZ Comments: Infant formula and botulism Antibiotic resistance under the microscope

#### **JULY 2014**

The end of medical diagnostics and space exploration? Why helium recycling matters

Archaeologist Professor Mike Morwood has died

Is nuclear the answer to Australia's energy needs?

Australia's science literacy falls

Ice loss records too short (Nature Geoscience)

Omega fatty acids and allergies in children (PLOS ONE)

UK Comments: Air pollution and lung cancer / heart disease (Lancet)

Growing a human liver (*Nature*) IVF and mental retardation (*JAMA*)



The Advertiser, 4 October 2013
Briefing: What is technology doing to kids' brains?

# **AUSSMC STAFF**

The AusSMC went through a number of changes between July 2013 and June 2014. We said goodbye to our Business Relations Manager, Carol Atkinson in July, as well as media officer Lucy Simmonds in September. A number of new faces joined the team with Jordan Rush brought in short-term to help with the development of Scimex and Karen Noble coming on board as Executive Assistant to the CEO. Dr Melanie Bagg also joined us in the newly created position of Business Development and Partnerships Manager in March 2014. Finally, Megan Wright joined as Media Officer in May while Lyndal Byford went on maternity leave.

At June 2014, the AusSMC staff consisted of:

- Dr Susannah Eliott, CEO
- Nigel Kerby Project Manager
- Marilyn Arnold, Office Manager
- Lyndal Byford, Media Manager [on maternity leave]
- Dr Melanie Bagg, Business Development and Partnerships Manager
- Karen Noble, EA to the CEO
- Dr Joseph Milton, Senior Media Officer
- Annika Dean, Media Officer
- Megan Wright, Media Officer



AusSMC staff from left: Nigel Kerby, Dr Susannah Eliott, Dr Melanie Bagg, Lyndal Byford, Annika Dean, Marilyn Arnold, Dr Joseph Milton and Megan Wright

#### AusSMC in the media

Along with a number of other media interviews the staff participated in, Susannah and Joe continued their involvement with the Research Filter segment on RN Drive, hosted by Waleed Aly.

AusSMC staff are on air about twice a month, and are a part of a weekly slot where science communicators discuss interesting science stories that have been in the media recently.

The interviews can be found at <a href="http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/drive">http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/drive</a>.



Joe and Susannah with RN Drive host Waleed Aly

## **BOARD MEMBERS**

The AusSMC Board. chaired by Peter Yates AM, meets four times a year. Deputy chairs are Robyn Williams from the ABC and Dr Graham Mitchell, Chief Scientist of Victoria. Board members at 30 June 2014 were:

Peter Yates AM (Chair) Chair, RiAus and Chair, Faculty of Business and Economics, The University of Melbourne

Robyn Williams (Deputy Chair) Presenter, The Science Show, ABC

Dr Graham Mitchell (Deputy Chair) Chief Scientist, State Government of Victoria

Jim Carroll
Executive Producer: World
News Australia, SBS

Peter Crewe
CEO, AIA Australia

John Croll CEO, iSentia

Professor Merlin Crossley Dean of Science, The University of New South Wales

Professor David Day Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), Flinders University

Professor Karen Day Dean of Science, University of Melbourne

Professor Graham Durant Director, Questacon - The National Science and Technology Centre









Dr Michael Ellies Media consultant

Gavin Jackman
Executive Global Head,
Corporate Affairs and Social
Responsibility, Orica Limited

Brad Hatch Manager of Communications, Fairfax Media

Melvin Mansell State Editorial Director, SA, WA & NT, News Ltd

Sharon McHale Senior Director Public Affairs, CSL Limited

Fiona McLeod

External Affairs Manager,

Australia Pacific LNG

Oona Nielssen General Manager: Communication, CSIRO

Professor Mary O'Kane NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer

Leonie Walsh Lead Scientist for Victoria

The Hon Jay Weatherill Premier, Government of South Australia

Dr Paul Willis Director, RiAus

**PATRONS** 

Dr Alan Finkel AM Chancellor of Monash University (National) Baroness Professor Susan Greenfield CBE University of Oxford (International)

# SCIENCE ADVISORY PANEL

SAP members at 30 June 2014 were:

Professor Snow Barlow University of Melbourne

Professor Alan Finkel AM

President, Australian Academy of

Technological Sciences & Engineering (ATSE)

Professor Lyn Beazley AO

Chief Scientist of Western Australia

Emeritus Professor Max Brennan AO
Former Chief Scientist for South Australia

Professor Adrienne Clarke AC Chancellor, La Trobe University

Professor Alan Cooper University of Adelaide



Professor Marcello Costa Flinders University

Professor Derek Denton AC University of Melbourne

Professor Peter Doherty AC University of Melbourne

Professor Tim Flannery
Climate Council

Professor Michael Holland

President, Science and Technology Australia

Professor Bryan Gaensler University of Toronto

Professor Patricia Vickers-Rich Monash University









Professor Bob Williamson AO University of Melbourne

Dr Geoff Garrett AO Queensland Chief Scientist

Professor Richard Head Director, Sansom Institute for Health Research

Professor Robert Hill SA Museum and University of Adelaide

Professor Marcia Langton AM University of Melbourne

Emeritus Professor Ian Lowe AO *Griffith University* 



Professor Caroline McMillen

Vice-Chancellor, University of Newcastle

Emeritus Professor Sir Gustav Nossal AC CBE *University of Melbourne* 

Professor John Simons

President, Council for the Humanities, Arts
and Social Sciences (CHASS)

Professor Michelle Simmons University of New South Wales

Professor Fiona Stanley AC

Patron, Telethon Institute for Child Health
Research

Professor Malcolm Walter
University of New South Wales

## SPONSORS AND AFFILIATES

All support is capped at 10% of the AusSMC's budget to maintain the Centre's independence. The AusSMC is grateful to the following supporters during 2013-2014.

#### **Foundation Sponsors**





































#### **Sponsors**











#### **Affiliates**















































#### **Supporters**













# FINANCIALS

INCOME	2014 (\$)	2013 (\$)
Sponsorship Received Project funds Affiliation Funds Briefings Other Income	600,248.00 207,012.00 59.804.00 13,309.00 14,263.00 894,636.00	489,775.00 158,272.00 78,500.00 12,535.00 10,326.00 749,408.00
OTHER INCOME Interest Received	31,041.00	14,715.00
TOTAL INCOME	925,677.00	764,123.00
EXPENDITURE		
Salaries and wages Project expenses Program expenses Briefings Office expenses Board meeting expenses Depreciation Travel expenses Marketing and development costs	654,815.00 141,380.00 2,912.00 14,590.00 49,451.00 7,110.00 27,275.00 11,516.00 10,686.00	603,871.00 86,531.00 6,386.00 10,648.00 39,483.00 5,999.00 29,831.00 11,104.00 13,089.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	919,735.00	806,942.00
Surplus/(loss) Other comprehensive income Total comprehensive surplus/(loss) for the year Retained surplus at the beginning of the financial year Retained surplus at the end of the financial year	5,942.00 5,942.00 128,257.00 134,199.00	(42,819.00) (42,819.00) 171,076.00 128,257.00



#### **The Australian Science Media Centre**

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