



ANNUAL REVIEW 1 JULY 2015 TO 30 JUNE 2016

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Australian Science Media Centre Inc. Annual Review 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016

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THE YEAR IN REVIEW

In November the AusSMC turned ten and it was a fantastic time to celebrate the achievements of the Centre over the past ten years and look to the future, undoubtedly a time of continuing change. When AusSMC opened its doors in 2005, Facebook was scarcely more than a year old, Twitter hadn't been thought of and online media was still just a fraction of the total news pool. We worked with a group of 80 specialist science, technology, health and environment reporters in newsrooms around the country and helped feed evidence-based science to a predominantly print, radio and television news stream. How times have changed!

Throughout this first decade, we have adapted to the upheavals in the media landscape, providing online news briefings for increasingly busy journalists, expert reactions to breaking news, and story alerts to help them find the important science stories amongst a sea of information. We also created a media training portal to help scientists engage with the media (ScienceMediaSavvy.org) and placed them directly into newsrooms to work alongside journalists (Scientists in Residence).

But by far our biggest innovation has been Scimex (the Science Media Exchange) that was created to help broker the relationship between researchers and the media during a period of extreme disruption. Launched in March 2015, Scimex is now a go-to place for science stories, multimedia and expertise and is used by over a thousand journalists from Australia, NZ

and a variety of other countries.

Scimex has enormous potential as a hub of Australian and NZ research and a place where people go to find quality peer-reviewed information. The definition of a journalist is changing fast and we want to make sure that bloggers and others who create content on the internet have a good source of scientific expertise and information in an accessible format. The year ended with the exciting announcement of a new Inspiring Australia grant to take Scimex to the next level in 2016-17 with lots of improvements and the inclusion of video. So watch this space!

We've been overwhelmed by the good will and support of our supporters, now nearly 70 of them! We want to especially thank our Foundation sponsors and Board members who have devoted many hours as well as financial support. And of course the incredibly hard working staff at the AusSMC.



Peter Yates and Susannah Eliott





LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

SCIMEX

During 2015-16 our main focus was the continuing development of Scimex.org, the breaking science news portal for Australia and NZ that we launched officially in March 2015. The Scimex portal has already proven its worth and as at June 30 2016 had distributed more than 3,000 science stories to journalists in Australia and NZ. There are over 1,100 journalists using Scimex (68% from Australia, 27% from NZ and 5% from media outlets in other countries) and spending an average of 12 minutes on the site at each session. Nearly 80% of all journalists registered with the AusSMC now use Scimex to access stories, experts and multimedia, most of them returning multiple times.

In July we held a national multimedia competition to collate striking visual material from the scientific community and used the announcement of the winners to launch the Scimex Multimedia Hub. Online media is a very visual place and journalists need video, graphics, stills and animations to help get their science stories published. We plan to populate the hub over time and turn it into a go-to place for stunning science images and video.

In August we launched the Scimex Events Calendar, a handy planning guide for journalists and a place for institutions to highlight significant events. The Calendar kicked off with several hundred events during National Science Week and is now populated with events from all over Australia at all times of the year.



Science media exchange

SPONSORSHIP AND THE SCIENCE-MEDIA COLLABORATION

Support for the Centre continued to grow as we gained a new foundation sponsor in Curtin University. University of South Australia, Data 61 and the Australian Government's Defence, Science and Technology Group also came on as gold sponsors. Our Science-Media Collaboration also expanded with the Garvan Institute of Medical Research, The Australian Plant Phenomics Facility, Queensland Museum and Westmead Institute of Medical Research joining as affiliates.

SCIENTISTS IN RESIDENCE

The Scientists in Residence program, funded by the Federal Government's Inspiring Australia initiative, finished in mid 2015. However we were able to keep the program running on a smaller scale and in August placed Prof Craig Simmons at the Advertiser. The aim of the program is



to encourage new collaborative content that is created by scientists working together with journalists.

Thanks to a South Australian Science Week grant, we placed Professor Andrew Groves, an Ice addiction expert from Deakin University and Flinders University with two regional newspapers in the Sout-East of SA during Science Week in August 2015. Andrew worked with journalists on several articles and met with a number of community groups in Naracoorte.

"I am pleased to say that it was very useful and will certainly lead to further collaborations/efforts in this space,... the main benefit was that it allowed

me to build networks and listen to key members of the community to really get a sense of what is happening on the ground in these areas. One of the highlights was being able to speak with the students and staff from the Independent Learning Centre in Naracoorte." *Dr Andrew Groves*

"Andrew was great - the morning's discussion with three Country Health SA members seemed very worth the while for both parties. I think it was definitely worthwhile and good for continuing the "ice discussion" down here." *Emily Erickson, Coastal Leader journalist*

Groundwater scientist Professor Craig Simmons from Flinders University was placed with the Advertiser in August 2015.

"The residency is amazing! I love it! I am learning

so much and it is a thrill working in the newsroom. I am really enjoying it. Clare, Jamie and the Advertiser team have been wonderful hosts and mentors. I would heartily recommend a newsroom residency to others! " *Professor Craig Simmons*



ENCOURAGING SCIENTISTS TO COMMUNICATE

AusSMC staff provided presentations and workshops for scientists at various stages of their careers to introduce them to the mind-set and workings of modern media operations, including how to make their own science more attractive for reporters, preparing for media interviews, working with institutional media teams and avoiding potential media pitfalls. CEO Susannah Eliott and members of the media team provided media training for The Defence Science and Technology Group (DSTG), UniSA, ARC Centre of Excellence for Nanoscale Biophotonics, Society for Reproduction, University of Adelaide, Australian Institute of Policy and Science, Geoscience Australia, Garvan Institute of Medical Research, ARC Centre of Excellence for Translational Photosynthesis, University of Canberra, Swinburne University of Technology, ARC Centre of Excellence for Convergent Bio-Nano Science and Technology, Florey Institute of Neuroscience and Mental Health, ARC Centre of Excellence for Engineered Quantum Systems, Southern Cross University, RiAus, Agilent, Australian Plant Phenomics Facility, NCI, ARC Centre of Excellence for Ultrahigh Bandwidth Devices for Optical Systems (CUDOS).

INDIGENOUS MEDIA MENTORING PROGRAM

Planning for the Indigenous Media Mentoring Program took off this year. In partnership with the Wollotuka Institute at the University of Newcastle and National Indigenous Television at SBS, and with the support of the National Australia Bank, the program will see a small group of early to mid-career Indigenous researchers trained in media and presentation skills and provided with the opportunity to talk about their work with a variety of media outlets.

Candidates will engage in a three-day media training program at the University of Newcastle's Sydney CBD campus in Ausgust/September 2016, with mentoring by experienced Indigenous academics and journalists. The primary role of the mentors is to encourage the early career participants and provide feedback on their media engagements. Mentors include:

Professor Peter Radoll – Dean of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership and Strategy, University of Canberra.

Dr Misty Jenkins – Walter and Eliza Hall Institute. Professor John Maynard – Professor of Indigenous History, Wollotuka Institute. Professor Lisa Jackson-Pulver – Pro-Vice Chancellor Engagement and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership, Western Sydney University. Tanya Orman – Channel Manager, NITV. Suzy Hutchins – RMIT.

Graduates from the program will receive ongoing mentoring by the AusSMC and media opportunities with outlets such as NITV, ABC RN, The Sydney Morning Herald and The Conversation.

MEDIA SNAPSHOT

We organised 30 media briefings and sent out 86 sets of expert comments throughout the year. Below is a small collection of the stories we launched or contributed to.

Australia captures first close-ups of Pluto - July

2015

Australia made history in July, when the CSIRO's Canberra Deep Space Communication Complex (CDSCC) became the first tracking station in NASA's Deep Space Network to receive data from the New Horizon's spacecraft as it made its historical close encounter with Pluto. Coverage generated 861 media hits, including ABC News 24, The Sydney Morning Herald, The Today Show and Radio National.

Australian wins Ig Nobel Prize for the 'unboil an egg machine' - Sept 2015

September saw the Ig Nobel prizes - a spoof of the prestigious Nobels acknowledging research that "makes people laugh, and then think" – awarded to two Australian researchers. The Centre held a briefing with Ig Nobel winner Flinders University Chemistry Professor Colin Raston live from Boston after he won the award for the creation of the "un-boil an egg machine". The device is a compact machine capable of unravelling proteins - the process that can turn the white of a boiled egg back into its uncooked form. The briefing generated 453 media hits including The Advertiser, The Sydney Morning Herald and ABC The World Today.

Do we need animals in research? - February 2016

Earlier in the year, a private members bill was introduced in federal parliament which called for a ban on the importation of primates for use in research. This lead to an increase in media coverage on the oft-debated subject. In order to answer some of the questions surrounding the topic, and to give scientists an avenue to speak, we ran an online media briefing with three scientific experts to discuss if we still needed animal research and what its purpose was.

Zika briefing at University of Sydney- February 2015

As media interest in the Zika virus grew, we realised a need to make Australian experts available to journalists. We suggested to the University of Sydney a simultaneous press conference (to be held at the university) and online briefing, allowing journalists to film the experts for TV but also listen online if they weren't based in Sydney. The combined media conference/briefing was very successful with five camera crews and 10 journalists attending in person and another 20 tuning in online.



The Today Show (CH. 9)



ABC News online



Huffington Post



ABC News 24

Water on Mars - September 2015

In late September, it was officially announced that NASA's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter had identified evidence of water on Mars. Unlike many other NASA announcements this one was accompanied by a journal paper to be published in Nature Geoscience. Knowing the scale of the news, we collected a number of expert comments in space and astronomy and sent them to journalists prior to the embargo lifting on the Nature paper. The expert reaction generated 591 news hits including Channel 9, The Sydney Morning Herald and ABC News.

Red meat linked to cancer- October 2015

At the end of October, The International Agency for Research on Cancer classified the consumption of red meat as possibly carcinogenic to humans. In order to clarify the IARC classification system, and to make clear the known risks between meat and cancer, we released a collection of expert comments, including nutritionists and cancer experts, the day the IARC statement was released. The reaction generated 622 news hits including The Australian, ABC News and 2UE Sydney.

Agreement reached at COP 21 in Paris -December 2015

In the middle of December world leaders and experts descended on Paris for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Conference of the Parties (COP 21). As the convention drew to a close a number of announcements were made, including a historic agreement between 200 countries to limit global warming. We sent out a number of expert reactions during this time discussing the scope of the agreement and what it meant to Australia. The reaction generated 128 media hits including Sky News and The Guardian.

Gravitational waves discovered - February 2016

In what could well be the announcement of 2016, scientists revealed in February they had finally found gravitational waves. The revelation confirms a major prediction of Albert Einstein's 1915 general theory of relativity and opens an unprecedented new window into the cosmos. We worked closely with all the various Australian contributors from a number of states to coordinate media releases and expert commentary as well videos, images and animations. Over 1000 news hits were generated, including Channel 10, Triple J and The Australian.



The Sydney Morning Herald



Daily Telegraph



SBS World News



The Project (Ch. 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 17,000 media hits in Australia and overseas.

JULY 2015	
	Alzheimer's drugs announcements from the Alzheimer's Association International Conference (AAIC)
	Australia dodges global increase in bushfires (Nature Communications)
	Debate article on homeopathy criticises recent NHMRC report (The BMJ) Australia captures world first close-ups of Pluto
	Death of Harry Messel
	New NZ emissions target announced
	Agriculture White Paper UNESCO reaches decision on Great Barrier Reef
AUG 2015	NSW flooding and Jerrara Dam evacuation
	Vaccine for broad protection against influenza (Nature Medicine)
	Government rejects adding Meningococcal B vaccine to PBS Working long hours linked to higher risk of stroke (The Lancet)
	Cut fat not carbs to lose body fat (Cell Metabolism)
	Are we alone? The \$100m question
	Federal government announces carbon emission targets
	The whole Universe is slowly dying Blue Mountains winter bushfires – are they unusual?
	Wireless radiation and cancer (Electromagnetic Biology and Medicine)
SEPT 2015	Water on Mars (Nature Geoscience)
	Poor access to radiotherapy for cancer (The Lancet Oncology)
	MERS and the Hajj stampede
	UN Sustainable Development Goals
	Australian wins Ig Nobel Prize for the 'unboil an egg machine' Global links between air pollution and early deaths (Nature)
	Latest Kirby Institute stats - STIs still rising, but there's hope for killer hep C
	Can you 'catch' Alzheimer's from contaminated injections? (Nature)
	Radiation therapy may undermine cancer treatment by suppressing the immune system
	(Nature Immunology) The last five years of assisted reproduction in Australia
	Drugged and depressed: Mental health in country Australia
OCT 2015	
001 2015	Low fat diets no magic bulletbut still better than nothing Dr Alan Finkel officially announced as Australia's Chief Scientist
	Red meat linked to cancer – WHO report
	Industrial waste and orange peel can safely scrub the oceans of mercury
	The highs and lows of Aussie drug use
	Chronic pain – the hidden health crisis Victoria set to legalise medical marijuana
	High Court rules breast cancer genes can't be patented
	Bushfire season begins early
	Gene-edited micropigs to be sold as pets

NOV 2015	SA Bushfires
	Federal Government's Mental Health Plan Launch of the Australian Power Generation Technology Report
	WMO release global temperature data – how is 2015 stacking up?
	WMO release global temperature data – how is 2015 stacking up?
	Genetically modified fruit fly to be trialled in WA Genetically modified salmon approved by US FDA
	COP out or global triumph - can the climate talks in Paris succeed?
	WA Bushfires
	Australian Nuclear waste sites shortlist released Gene-edited cell therapy saves baby girl from leukaemia
	Australia can prosper while protecting the environment (Nature)
	I, Drive – On the road to driverless cars
DEC 2015	AusSMC's Top 10 Science Stories 2015 and Top 10 Weird Science Stories 2015
	Agreement reached at COP 21 in Paris
	Draft COP 21 Paris agreement released Could a few drinks a day reduce Alzheimer's patients' risk of death?
	Australian Federal Government's Innovation Statement
	Carbon emissions fall – release of the Global Carbon Budget for 2015
	C-section and asthma risk (JAMA)
JAN 2016	Zika virus outbreak
	2015 Hottest Year on Record: NOAA Contaminated Australian honey
	Could ultra-high frequency sound be making us sick? (Proceedings of the Royal Society A)
	Go with your gut: How yo-yo diets, poop pills and modern food are changing our insides
	Food packaging chemicals - FSANZ total diet study
	Risk of stillbirth twice as high for disadvantaged women (The Lancet) Forget the ice age, this is the human age
	Bureau releases Annual Climate Statement 2015
FEB 2016	Doing disaster better: Recovery from fires, floods and storms
	2016: A space mining odyssey
	ABC's Catalyst programme 'Wi-Fried' about EM radiation and health Do we need to use animals in research?
	Is a pesticide to blame for microcephaly, not Zika?
	Nuclear Royal Commission report
	Nuclear Royal Commission delivers first report Zika in pregnant women in Australia
	Open Letter on CSIRO job cuts
	Gravitational waves discovered
	Animals adrift, fish flustered and plants uprooted: how we're upending the natural world Heatwaves, downpours and drought: what's behind all the weird weather?
	CSIRO job cuts
	Painkillers surge in Australia while most of the world misses out (The Lancet)
	Covering caesarean babies with mum's microbes to boost immunity (Nature Medicine) Zika briefing at University of Sydney
MARCH 2016	Sea level rise could be much worse than expected (Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics) Vitamin D / MS link explained
	Australia's stem cell revolution
	UK's sugar tax - will it work, and would it work in Australia?
	'Unboil-an-egg' machine set to cook up better solar panels, cancer drugs and gadgets
	Coral bleaching on Great Barrier Reef High time? Experts to brief pollies on decriminalising drugs at National Drug Summit

APRIL 2016	Australian Antarctic Strategy and 20 Year Action Plan
	CSIRO announces Climate Science Centre Carbon dioxide driving massive increase in plant growth (Nature Climate Change) Corals' inbuilt protection from bleaching is under threat Exposure to chemicals in plastic alters bone (Endocrinology) Second genetically modified human embryos created (Journal of Assisted Reproduction and Genetics*) Hacking plants' solar power to 'turbocharge' crops Models on climate extremes questioned (Nature) Aussie stem cell repair system could help spinal injuries (PNAS) We just keep on getting fatter (The Lancet)
MAY 2016	What's ahead for winter sniffles?
	Mobile phone exposure linked to cancer in rats Superbug resistant to all antibiotics found in the US (Antimicrobial Agents and Chemotherapy) Alzheimer's culprit helps fight infections (Science Translational Medicine) Swap the spuds, and chuck the chips to lower blood pressure Proof Zika causes birth defects Federal Budget 2016 Mixing CO2 and oceans – what do you get?
JUNE 2016	Experts warn against Europe adopting Australian asylum system
	 What will Brexit mean for Aussie science? Who to kill? An ethical dilemma for driverless cars Superbugs in Aussie pets and livestock WHO finds drinking very hot drinks a likely cancer risk but no evidence of a link between coffee and cancer Universe expanding too fast - is it dark radiation? (Astrophysical Journal) FSANZ releases food nanotech safety reports



Professor Lyn Gilbert speaks at the Zika briefing held at the University of Sydney *ABC News 24, February 2*

AUSSMC STAFF

The AusSMC went through a few changes between July 2015 and June 2016. Meg Duggan joined the team as Support Officer in July, 2015 and we welcomed back Media Manager Lyndal Byford who returned from maternity leave in August, 2015. We said goodbye to Media Officer Annika Dean in May, 2016, who was replaced by new team member Anna Kosmynina. Nigel Kerby left on long service leave in June to do a 12 month voluntary placement in Indonesia.

- Dr Susannah Eliott, CEO
- Nigel Kerby, Project Manager
- Dr Joseph Milton, Senior Media Officer
- Anna Kosmynina, Media Officer
- Dr Melanie Bagg, Business Development and Partnerships Manager
- Ben Kaldi, Science Information Officer
- Meg Duggan, Support Officer
- Marilyn Arnold, Office Manager
- Lyndal Byford, Media Manager
- Dr Megan Wright, Media Officer
- Emily Erickson, Project Assistant



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 Patricia Karvelas. Melanie has also started a fortnightly 'medical science myth busting' slot for ABC 891 Mornings. All three are regular guest on 2CC radio in Canberra.

AusSMC staff are on air almost every week discussing interesting science stories that have been in the media recently.

Drive interviews can be found at http://www.abc.net.au/ radionational/programs/drive.



BOARD MEMBERS

The AusSMC Board, chaired by Peter Yates AM, meets four times a year. Deputy chairs are Robyn Williams from the ABC and Merlin Crossley, Dean of Science at UNSW. Board members in 2015-16 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

Professor Merlin Crossley (Deputy Chair) Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education), The University of New South Wales

Jim Carroll Director, News, Current Affairs & Sport, SBS

John Croll *CEO, iSentia*

Professor Karen Day Dean of Science, University of Melbourne

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

Harry Efthimiou Chief Finance & Strategy Officer, AIA Australia

Dr Michael Ellies Media consultant

Brad Hatch Manager of Communications, Fairfax Media

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









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

Anton Middleberg Pro-Vice Chancellor (Reasearch), University of Queensland

Oona Nielssen General Manager: Communication, CSIRO

Professor Mary O'Kane NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer

Gordon Radford Partner, Johnson Winter & Slattery

Professor Robert Saint Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), Flinders University

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

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 University of South Australia

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 Macquarie University

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 2015-16.



FINANCIALS

INCOME

2016 (\$) 2015 (\$)

Sponsorship Received	782,343.00	680,389.00
Project funds	31,689.00	178,911.00
Affiliation Funds	153,551.00	134,573.00
Cost recovery	15,356.00	9,898.00
Other Income	19,191.00	<u>12,617.00</u>
	1,002,130.00	1,016,388.00

OTHER INCOME

Interest Received	 11,675.00	22,411.00

TOTAL INCOME

1,013,805.00 1,038,799.00

EXPENDITURE

Salaries and wages	720,108.00	686,332.00
Project expenses	114,970.00	211,095.00
Program expenses	-	-
Briefings	13,103.00	9,728.00
Office expenses	80,997.00	42,542.00
Board meeting expenses ······	11,641.00	6,291.00
Depreciation	8,082.00	18,963.00
Travel expenses	30,102.00	22,83700
Marketing and development costs	6,243.00	<u>9,440.00</u>

TOTAL EXPENDITURE

985,246.00 1,007,228.00

Surplus	28,559.00	31,571.00
Other comprehensive income		
Total comprehensive surplus for the yearRetained surplus at the beginning of the financial yearTransfer to reservesRetained surplus at the end of the financial year	28,559.00 155,770.00 10,000.00 194,329.00	31,571.00 <u>134,199.00</u> (10,000.00) 155,770.00



The Australian Science Media Centre

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