

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

31st Annual Meeting of the ANZSCDBI at ComBio2012

26th September 2012.

Adelaide Convention Centre

Adelaide, SA

Dear friends and colleagues,

This has been an interesting year coming to grips with the running of the society and the many activities that it supports. I wish to thank the members of the executive who have been very supportive in the collective decision making process, particularly Ian Smyth and Kieran Harvey for their professionalism and dedication to their roles as Secretary and Treasurer respectively. I also wish to acknowledge Edna Hardeman's critical role as past presidents in helping us not to "reinvent the wheel" and Carol Wicking as President elect in guiding our decisions. I can report that we have an effective and motivated executive in charge of the societies interests and activities,

State/NZ Chapter Activities

A real effort has been placed on trying to build the activity of the society locally through the use of the society's state and territory representatives, continuing on from the previous presidents emphasis on this. The society's local reps play an extremely important role in coordinating and delivering the "grass roots" activities of the society. Regional meetings are the real focus and it is pleasing to see the 4 stand-alone meetings in Victoria, NSW Queensland and South Australia going so well. These meetings provide a real chance for post docs and students to strut their stuff and get noticed locally. We are very happy to support these initiatives and the increased funding for the yearly state meetings has allowed the invitation of interstate speakers, which has proved a bit of a draw card for these meetings. The current state Reps are listed below.

Retiring.

VIC Julian Heng (ARMI)

QLD Michael Piper (QBI)

NSW Anthony Kee (UNSW)

SA Quenten Schwarz (CCB)

NZ Peter Dearden (Uni Otago) and Justin O'Sullivan (Massey Uni)

Ongoing

VIC Jeff Mann (MCRI)

QLD Annemiek Beverdam (Uni of QLD)

NSW Will Hughes (Garvan)

SA Tash Harvey (CCB, SA Pathology)

WA Archa Fox (WAIMR)

Nominated.

VIC Jake Baum (WEHI)

QLD Kelly Smith (IMB)

NSW Matt Naylor (Uni of Syd)

SA Donna Denton (CCB, SA Pathology)

ACT Kristen Barratt (ANU)

NZ Megan Wilson (Uni of Otago) and Julia Horsfield (Uni of Otago)

WA Evan Ingley continuing

I thank the retiring state Reps for their hard work and dedication to the role. I also note that for the first time we have a nomination from the ACT! Many thanks to the Secretary Ian Smyth for pushing hard to make sure we had quality nominations for all positions.

Society Awards

President's Medal:

It is a great pleasure to announce the awarding of the Society's two awards, the President's Medal and the ANZSCDB Young Investigator Award. The President's Medal is the highest honour that the Society bestows on its most highly acclaimed members and this year's highly worthy winner is Prof Marilyn Renfree. A full account of Marilyn's research contributions will appear in the December Newsletter as part of our annual COMBIO round up and Marilyn will present a retrospective of her career in research and hopefully, a view of things to come in the ANZSCDB President's Medal Plenary lecture at ComBio2012. However a brief précis of Marilyn's scientific contributions is outlined here. Marilyn is a University Laureate Professor and the Ian Potter Chair of Zoology at the Department of Zoology, The University of Melbourne. The central focus of research of her laboratory is to understand the control of reproduction and development in mammals. The laboratory studies a wide range of mammals, from wallabies to women, with an emphasis on Australian mammalian fauna, particularly marsupials and monotremes and the evolution of reproduction. She has received numerous previous awards including the Gottschalk Medal (Australian Academy of Science), the Mueller Medal (ANZAAS) and the Gold Conservation Medal for 2000 of the Zoological Society of San Diego. She received the Whitley Book award in 1987 with Hugh Tyndale-Biscoe for their textbook Reproductive Physiology of Marsupials. She was elected a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science in 1997, and a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Biology in 1998. She currently serves as the Vice President and Secretary (Biological Sciences) of the Australian Academy of Science. I warmly congratulate Prof Renfree on her award.

The ANZSCDB Young Investigator Award:

The YIA recognises the up-and-coming leaders in the discipline of Cell and Developmental Biology. The aim of the YIA is to draw attention to the achievements of our best and brightest and provide a bit of a leg up in the tough funding milieu that we all face. This year's winner is Dr Aleksandra Filipovska. Aleksandra is an ARC Future Fellow at the Centre for Medical Research at the University of Western Australia. Her work has been focused on identifying mammalian mitochondrial RNA-binding proteins and investigating their role in RNA metabolism in healthy cells and cell models of disease. She has published a number of high profile papers in this area of research recently. Aleksandra has been an active member of the society acting as a WA representative of ANZSCDB. We look forward to her talk and congratulate her on her achievements. A new award to replace those previously that were running out has been commissioned from Gordon Glass Blowing Studio on the Mornington Peninsula. This is a highly regarded glass works and the designed wave motif was regarded as appropriate to symbolize the award.

Scientific Meetings Supported

Combio 2011 Annual Meeting.

ANZSCDB registered Attendance at COMBIO 2011 was 96 people, down from 189 in Melbourne Oz Bio, which was an exceptional meeting in recent attendance due to the Oz Bio format including the involvement of international societies. Although the dip in registrations for Cairns COMBIO was anticipated, and it is clearly acknowledged that the meeting was exceptionally well organized with a number of fabulous international speakers, attendance was still the lowest for an Australian based meeting in the last 5 years. It is worth noting the inevitable downturn in COMBIO revenue that holding the meeting outside major Australian State capital cities will bring moving into the future.

To recap the society made the following awards at this meeting.

2011 Presidents Medal: Rob Parton.

2011 Young Investigator: Dagmar Wilhelm.

Toshiya Yamada Early Career Award: Michael Tallack.

David Walsh Student Prize: Cheryl Chia.

Keith Dixon Prize in Developmental Biology: Lisa Kass.
Cell Biology International Student Poster Prize: David Williamson.

ComBio2012 Annual Meeting.

This COMBIO is building as one of the strongest line-ups of international speakers that we have ever had at our annual meeting. Registration as of late October was at 102 members. We wish to extend our thanks to A/Prof Stuart Pitson, Centre for Cancer Biology, SA Pathology for his role as chair and ANZSCDB members A/Prof Paul Thomas, University of Adelaide and Professor Sharad Kumar, Centre for Cancer Biology, SA Pathology for the roles on the committee and all the session chairs and stream coordinators for their efforts in putting together an exciting meeting.

One issue that is worth noting is that the student travel grants that are offered for registration at COMBIO are very much under subscribed again this year. These are very widely advertised and it remains unclear why individuals are not applying for them. A broader discussion of the issue about the use of Society funds to support travel is detailed below.

ComBio2013 Annual Meeting: Will be held in Perth, WA Perth Convention Centre. 29 September - 3 October 2013.

ComBio 2014 and beyond: ComBio2014 has had to be moved from Sydney, as the convention center will close for refurbishment possibly until 2017. All executive of the societies involved in ComBio endorsed the proposal put forward by Frances Shannon (President ASBMB) that ComBio2014 would be held in Canberra with a joint organizing committee across the two cities. The Canberra Convention Centre is available for the dates required and Sally Jay has placed a hold on it. Thus ComBio 2014 will be held at the National Convention Centre, Canberra. 28 September - 2 October 2014. The possibility of a swap with Melbourne was canvassed but the Melbourne Convention centre was not available at that time. The schedule would follow with Melbourne in 2015, Brisbane 2016.

NSW Regional Meeting.

The annual NSW Cell and Developmental Biology Meeting was held on the 26th of March this year at the Garvan Institute of Medical Research in Sydney. This was the 18th of these meetings and was attended by approximately 80 researchers Han Weiping (Singapore Bioimaging Consortium) and Ueli Aebi (M.E. Müller Institute for Structural Biology, Biozentrum, University of Basel) to come and give keynote presentations and these formed the backbone of the meeting. Thanks to Will Hughes and Anthony Kee for their efforts with the meeting.

Victorian Regional meeting.

The 5th annual Melbourne Cell and Developmental Biology meeting is to be held on Friday the 2nd of November at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute (Parkville). The organizers Julian Heng and Jeff Mann have secured two overseas speakers to deliver plenary lectures on cell signaling, Professor Ed Manser, IMCB, Singapore and developmental biology Professor John Carroll, UCL, UK. The format has been changed slightly this year to include poster presentations (in addition to the invited oral presentations) from invited abstracts.

Queensland Regional Meeting.

The Queensland Cell and Developmental Biology Meeting will be held on October 4 2012 8:30am - 5pm Queensland Brain Institute. The University of Queensland St Lucia, Brisbane, Australia. The organisers (Annemiek Beverdam and Michael Piper) have secured a number of excellent speakers, Professor Robin Lovell-Badge National Institute for Medical Research, London, UK Dr Quenten Schwarz Centre for Cancer Biology, SA Pathology, Adelaide, South Australia Dr Michael Samuel Centre for Cancer Biology, SA Pathology, Adelaide, South Australia.

South Australian Regional Meeting.

The 2nd SA ANZSCDB meeting is scheduled for Friday 23rd November at the University of Adelaide organized by Quenten Swartz and Natasha Harvey. Planning for the meeting is well advanced and will take the form of a "satellite" meeting to the AHMR congress that will be held in Adelaide the following week. Ben Hogan has been booked for a plenary speaking slot and the organizers are chasing Elaine Dzierzak and Alpha Yap as other plenary speakers. This will be an all day event with student / post doc talks and posters. The organizers are awaiting confirmation of sponsorship from Biorad, Invitrogen and Uni of Adelaide but money from SA Pathology has already been forth coming.

Western Australian Meeting Activity.

While not possessing the critical mass to generate their own meeting ANZSCDB sponsored a prize at the Combined Biological Sciences Meeting held in Perth at the Uniclub of UWA on the 24th of August. This meeting is an important event for bringing together Perth Life Scientists and giving ECRs and students a chance to present their work. The winner was Alison Louw for Poster Prize (\$300), Best Student Poster within the category of Cell and Developmental Biology. " RMND5 Protein Targets the Prostatic Tumour Suppressor, NKX3.1 for Proteasomal Degradation." Alison Louw, Janet Harvey and Jacqueline Bentel, Anatomical Pathology, Royal Perth Hospital, and School of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, University of Western Australia.

Other meetings supported:

The Hunter Meeting.

The hunter meeting continues to be a quality meeting for cell biology enthusiasts. Allowing members to meet in a more focused "Gordon meeting" style format. The half-day imaging workshop prior to the start of the main meeting continues to be a major draw card leading straight into a plenary talk. This year there was a high quality field of 10 invited international presenters. This years Keith Stanley Lecture was presented by Fiona Watt Cambridge Research Institute, on the subject of Regulation of epidermal stem cell fate by intrinsic and extrinsic signals. This session and speaker were sponsored by the ANZSCDB, and immediate Past- President, Edna Hardeman chaired the session. The Hunter meeting continues to an important meeting for ANZSCDB members and support for an ANZSCDB sponsored speaker will continue. Congrats to the convener Professor Peter Gunning (UNSW, Australia) and Co-convener: Professor Jennifer Stow, (IMB, University of Queensland, Australia). Next year Jenny will be ably assisted by Professor Sally Dunwoodie from the Victor Chang as co-convener.

The ANZSCDB Committee

An excellent initiative of the previous President was the formalization of the ANZSCDB committee. A boarder committee is required by the ANZSCDB constitution and the previous executive decided to invite prominent members to form 'The Committee' to provide advice, direction and participate in decision-making. The current Committee consists of Chris Mitchell (VIC), Sharad Kumar (SA), Phil Crosier (NZ), Miranda Grounds (WA), Richard Harvey (NSW), Peter Koopman (QLD) and Alpha Yap (QLD) (Past President) who have agreed to serve in these positions and provide oversight for the Society. Each member will serve a 2 year term, which can be renewed. The formal role that the committee plays is providing advice and judging applicants for the societies two major awards, The Presidents Medal and the Young Investigator Award. I wish to thank members of the committee for their advice and help during the year.

Corporate Sponsors

Sigma and Zeiss have generously sponsored the President's Medal and Young Investigator Award respectively in the past. Their commitment remains strong and both have been approached again this year and have verbally committed indefinitely to the sponsorship of this award. Kathryn Carey (Sigma) will once again make the award of the Presidents Medal at COMBIO in Adelaide. Sponsorship of the societies activities is an area where there is definite room for improvement and ideas on how to increase this are most welcome.

Secretariat and Website. I would like to thank Magic Touch Inc, in particular Ros Barrett-Lennard for their ongoing role as the Societies professional secretariat. The upgraded web site is improved and easier for members to navigate. This upgrade was completed under the previous presidents watch and I think makes a big difference to the societies interface to the world.

<http://www.anzscdb.org/>

Newsletter.

The newsletter has seen a series of new editors take the role over the last year. The December Newsletter was very ably edited by Susan Dacre, has done an excellent job taking the newsletter to the next level but was unable to perform the role with her ongoing commitments. Fiona Wylie however took over the role for the Winter newsletter and has completed the job extremely ably in very trying personal circumstances. I want to thank Fiona for all her efforts in getting the newsletter together. Fiona also writes much of the content of the newsletter and therefore is a very important individual in the newsletter effort. A number innovations in format have given the newsletter a more professional look and several new features have been introduced, including an opinion column where members can discuss society related issues and a publication show case where are number of high profile member publications are showcased each issue.

Challenges to Society the in the year ahead.

Finances and membership fees.

Juggling the societies meager finances remains an ongoing challenge. Reviewing and forecasting the societies expenses and contributions is becoming increasingly problematic. The revenue from ComBio is often not released for some considerable time after the meetings are over, a process that is largely out of our control a situation that became highly problematic at the start of this year when the society was for all intents and purpose in negative cash flow. Also as mentioned above, ComBio finances are not always reliable mechanism of income. Many of the recent ComBios have produced small or little income at all and income from membership is largely static, or in moderate decline and as a result the last 5 years have seen the society operate consistently in a deficit mode, and this has lead to a considerable erosion of the societies fiscal position, specifically the term deposit. The executive has taken a fiscally conservative view believing that where ever possible our expenses should at least balance with our income, and that the term deposit savings should be, at least, not eroded and in times of largess be added to. Thus, funding of the societies ongoing activities will need constant monitoring and may be highly variable from year to year and reality needs increase mechanisms of support.

In order to solve some of these issues, and maintain out current portfolio of funded activities, we are pursuing several strategies, attempting to increase membership (see below) and sponsorship. We are planning to bring our membership fees into line with a number of our sister societies and plan to increase membership fees. Bench marking places ANZSCDB is one of cheapest societies to join while having a portfolio of activities supported that is similar to many other societies. We think it is appropriate to bring the fees inline with sister societies such as ASBMB. We propose the following price rise

Australian member (p/a) \$AUD80.00 to \$100

Australian member (3 year package) \$AUD220.00 to \$250

Australian Student / Retired Member (p/a) \$AUD25.00 to \$35

Australian Student / Retired Member (3 year package) \$AUD60.00 to \$80

Corporate Member (p/a) \$AUD340.00 to \$400

For bench marking ASBMB charge the following rates

1yr = \$116

3 yr = \$348

Student = \$37

Student 3yr = \$111

Membership Issues.

Membership remains a big issue for the society, and the difficulty of maintaining and recruiting new members is an on going challenge. A membership committee has previously been formed, involving the President elect and all the State Reps and this year we hope to see some results from its activities. Necessarily sustained grass roots recruitment must come from the local level and the State Reps remain the only mechanisms we have to exert any traction on this issue. We hope to make some headway on this issue in the coming year.

Travel Support. Given the modest uptake of the ComBio student bursaries the executive is considering instituting a few broader travel scholarships awarded on a bi-yearly basis that can be used widely by both PhD students and post docs to travel to meetings that broadly align with the societies interests both locally and internationally. We remain hopeful that we could at least obtain some partial cooperate sponsorship of these travel awards which could amount to a reasonable sum of money. These awards could be assessed by the executive, and require both the applicant and the supervisor to be current members of the society. A meeting report for the Newsletter would also be required. This approach we believe would broaden the applicability of the travel scholarships as well as acting as a significant driver for membership.

Thanks to all who have helped during the year, I look forward to working with you all in 2013.



Pete Currie

President

Australia and New Zealand Society for Cell and Developmental Biology

September 26th, 2012