

in this issue

## AusSMC e-news

Welcome to the first edition of the Australian Science Media Centre's (AusSMC) email bulletin. If you would like to be added to our mailing list for regular updates, email your details to [info@aus-smc.org](mailto:info@aus-smc.org)

We open for business on Monday 28 November 2005. If you work in the media and you need a scientist for your story, you can contact us on 08 8207 7415, or email us at [info@aus-smc.org](mailto:info@aus-smc.org). We are setting up our website at the moment and in late November you will be able to see what's new at [www.aus-smc.org](http://www.aus-smc.org)



### Background

The AusSMC is an independent, not-for-profit, national organisation based in Adelaide in the Armoury Building at the back of the South Australian Museum. It aims to promote rational, accurate, evidence based science to journalists leading towards a more informed public debate. The centre is based on the UK's acclaimed Science Media Centre (SMC) and is an initiative of Baroness Susan Greenfield in her role as Adelaide's most recent Thinker in Residence.

The set up of the AusSMC was guided by a National Consultation Report by Becky Morelle, co-founder of the SMC in the UK. The idea was to gain a clear understanding of the Australian context, the cultures of the science and media communities and how the AusSMC could be of value within the Australian science media.

The report was based on interviews around Australia with a cross section of key stakeholders such as news editors, science and medical journalists, scientists, communication officers, and science communicators. It will be available on the AusSMC website at the end of November.

- [Background](#)
- [Services](#)
- [Activities](#)
- [Who we are](#)
- [Comment from AusSMC Founding Patron](#)
- [Sponsorship](#)
- [The Board of Management](#)
- [Science Advisory Panel](#)

### Contact AusSMC

(08) 8207 7415  
[info@aus-smc.org](mailto:info@aus-smc.org)  
[www.aus-smc.org](http://www.aus-smc.org)

## Services

The AusSMC will be both reactive and proactive, responding to the day-to-day needs of reporters as well as holding briefings on hot topics and providing comments from scientists on major developments. The centre will keep an updated database of Australian scientific experts who are good communicators and are prepared to give interviews in the timeframe required. One of the most useful services will be a 'Rapid Round-Up' of reaction - a series of quotes from scientists that represent viewpoints within mainstream science which will be emailed directly to journalists.

In the longer term the AusSMC will also proactively promote strong connections between the cultures of science and the media through Horizon Scanning involving scientists giving briefings to journalists on significant issues which are likely to arise in the future. The AusSMC will not offer any editorial comment or act as a media release agency. It aims to work collaboratively with organisations and individuals involved in communicating science, and not in competition with them.

## Activities

Several activities are planned for the weeks following the opening:

- A Rapid Round-Up of expert comment on a new international report on carbon capture and storage. The report was lead by Australian scientists and will be released at climate talks in Canada in December.
- A briefing on natural hazards: Was 2005 unusual? What can we expect in future?
- Rapid Round-Up on the Federal Government's review of Australia's stem cell research legislation.

Other activities will be organised as issues arise.

## Who we are

The AusSMC is in the process of establishing a full complement of staff. The team currently consists of three full time staff and two casual, part timers. Science or journalism students will also be employed on a casual basis to work on specific projects. Brad Cameron, a linguistics Masters student and freelance journalist is currently helping with our database.

- **Dr Susannah Elliott: CEO**  
Susannah comes with a PhD in cell biology from Macquarie University, a Graduate Diploma in Journalism from the University of Technology, Sydney and more than 13 years of practical experience in science communication with media as her primary focus. Since 2000, Susannah has been Communications Manager for the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme (IGBP), an international network of scientists working on global environmental change, based in Sweden. She moved to the AusSMC in September this year.
- **Peta Newbold: Senior Media Officer**  
Peta has worked in science journalism for many years and has a wealth of experience as a television and video producer of health, medical and science shows as well as science documentaries for Australia and the US. As a freelance medical writer she has contributed to numerous web sites and magazines and is a former columnist and feature writer for Medical Observer. More recently she worked in health public relations where her role included media liaison, issues management and bringing scientists and the media together.
- **Nigel Kerby: Project Officer**  
Nigel has more than 15 years experience in the media having worked with the Seven, Nine and Ten Networks in areas including programming, publicity and promotions. An ongoing interest in science led Nigel to pursue further studies in March 2004 and he is currently undertaking a Bachelor of Science in Biodiversity and Conservation at Flinders University.
- **Geoff Robertson: Board Secretary**  
Geoff was seconded from the Department of Premier and Cabinet, SA Government, to help with the implementation of the AusSMC. Geoff has managed the administration of the project since its inception and is now AusSMC Board Secretary.
- **Linda Cooper: Consultant**  
Linda is currently working for the Department of Premier and Cabinet, SA Government, implementing Baroness Greenfield's recommendations as Adelaide's Thinker in Residence. The AusSMC is the first of these projects and Linda has been involved since its inception. She has qualifications in the sciences, arts and communications and has developed collaborative projects that bring these groups together both in Australia and internationally.

## Comment from AusSMC Founding Patron

"The Australian Science Media Centre is a very exciting initiative that continues the work that was started by the parent Science Media Centre at The Royal Institution (Ri) in London. As such, I am delighted to endorse a similar facility in Australia, which will enable the media to gain fast access to informed and articulate scientists. Over the last three years we have proven that such a forum is vital for democratising science in the 21st Century.

The Science Media Centre has added to the quality of science reporting in both printed and broadcast media in the United Kingdom. Given the availability of both our copy and materials, as well as a strong endorsement from the Premier of South Australia combined with experience of Peter Yates, I have every confidence that the Australian Science Media Centre will succeed in the fastest possible time and have the maximum possible impact."

**Baroness Professor Susan Greenfield**

## Sponsorship

Guided by the Chair of the AusSMC Board, Mr Peter Yates, the AusSMC has been tremendously successful in attracting sponsorship. To ensure the independence of the centre, there is a ceiling of 10% of total operating costs on all sponsorship opportunities. There are two tiers of sponsorship:

- Foundation sponsorship. A contribution of \$30,000 a year for two years gives the right to be represented on the AusSMC Board. Foundation sponsors include Fairfax Holdings Limited, ABC, PBL, News Limited, APN, Macquarie Bank, CSIRO, Shell Australia, Royal Australian Chemical Institute, ResMed, Ernst & Young, and Prime TV.
- Gold sponsorship. A contribution of \$15,000 ensures recognition on all AusSMC printed material and online. Gold sponsors are also able to place specific issues on the agenda of the AusSMC board and participate in the discussion on that item. Gold sponsors to date include: Johnston, Winter and Slattery, University of Adelaide, and Dupont.

In addition, Johnson, Winter and Slattery have agreed to provide legal advice to the AusSMC on a pro bono arrangement.

The Government of South Australia has also significantly supported the development of the AusSMC. It has provided financial support for infrastructure set-up costs in the 2004/2005 year and considerable in kind assistance including:

- Provision of a full time Project Officer position
- Interim CEO position
- Assistance from Crown Solicitors Office and the Director, Commercial Advice
- One-off cash grant of \$150,000

## The Board of Management

The Board is chaired by Peter Yates, Managing Director of Allco Equity Partners Limited and meets every three months. Other board members include:

- Premier of South Australia, the Hon Mike Rann MP
- Fiona Fox, Director, Science Media Centre, UK
- Robyn Williams, ABC Science Journalist, Broadcaster and Author
- Dr Tim Flannery, Scientist, Director, SA Museum
- Mark Scott, Editor-in-Chief, Metropolitan Newspapers, John Fairfax Holdings Ltd
- Associate Professor Rob Morrison, Science Broadcaster
- Gary Linnell, Editor in Chief, The Bulletin, PBL
- Melvin Mansell, Editor in Chief, The Advertiser
- Warwick Smith, Head of Corporate Communications Division, Macquarie Bank
- Dr Mavis Abbey, Director, Human Nutrition Centre, CSIRO
- Tim Warren, Chairman, Shell Australia Ltd
- James Millar, CEO, Ernst & Young
- Greg Simpson, President, Royal Australian Chemical Institute
- Rob Douglas, COO, ResMed
- Andrew Werro, Communications Director, APN News and Media Ltd

## The Science Advisory Panel

The AusSMC needs the support of Australian science experts in all fields of science and has formed a Science Advisory Panel to provide advice when needed. Our Science Advisory Panel membership includes:

Name	Position/Affiliation
Emeritus Professor Ian Lowe AO	Emeritus Professor, School of Science, Griffith University.
Professor Peter Andrews, AO	Queensland Chief Scientist, Department of State Development and Innovation.
Professor Patricia Vickers-Rich	Faculty of Science, School of Geosciences, Monash University.
Professor Richard Head	Director, CSIRO Preventative Health Flagship Program
Baroness Professor Susan Greenfield, CBE	Director of the Royal Institution of Great Britain.
Professor David Henry	Director, Clinical Pharmacology, Mater Hospital, Newcastle.
Professor Helen Quinn	Director, Stanford Linear Acceleration Centre, Stanford University.
Professor Snow Barlow	Professor of Horticulture and Viticulture, University of Melbourne.
Professor Adrienne Clarke, AC, AO	Laureate Professor, School of Botany, University of Melbourne.
Sir Gus Nossal, AC, CBE	Emeritus Professor, Department of Pathology, University of Melbourne.
Dr Bryan Gaensler	Assistant Professor, Department of Astronomy, Harvard University.
Emeritus Professor Nancy Millis, AC, MBE	Chancellor, La Trobe University.
Professor Peter Doherty, AC,	Laureate Professor, Department of Microbiology and Immunology, University of Melbourne.
Professor Fiona Stanley, AC	Director, TVW Telethon Institute for Child Health Research.
Professor Bob Williamson AO	Director, Murdoch Children's Research Institute, University of Melbourne.
Professor Lyn Beazley	Professor of Zoology, School of Animal Biology, University of Western Australia.
Emeritus Professor Frank Fenner AC, CMG, MBE	Visiting Fellow, John Curtin School of Medical Research, Australian National University.
Professor Michelle Simmons	Federation Fellow, School of Physics, University of New South Wales.
Professor Fellow Malcolm Walter	Director of Astrobiology, Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences, Macquarie University.
Professor Marcia Langton	Chair of Australian Indigenous Studies, School of Anthropology, Geography & Environmental Studies, University of Melbourne.
Professor Alan Cooper	Federation Fellow, School of Earth & Environmental Sciences, University of Adelaide.
Professor Robert Hill	Head of Science, Science Centre, SA Museum.