

AUSTRALIAN
SCIENCE
MEDIA
CENTRE

Putting science in the headlines...

ausSMC
australian science media centre

“ The
AusSMC

has revolutionised
the way science
is communicated
in Australia.”

Professor Neville Nicholls,
Monash University

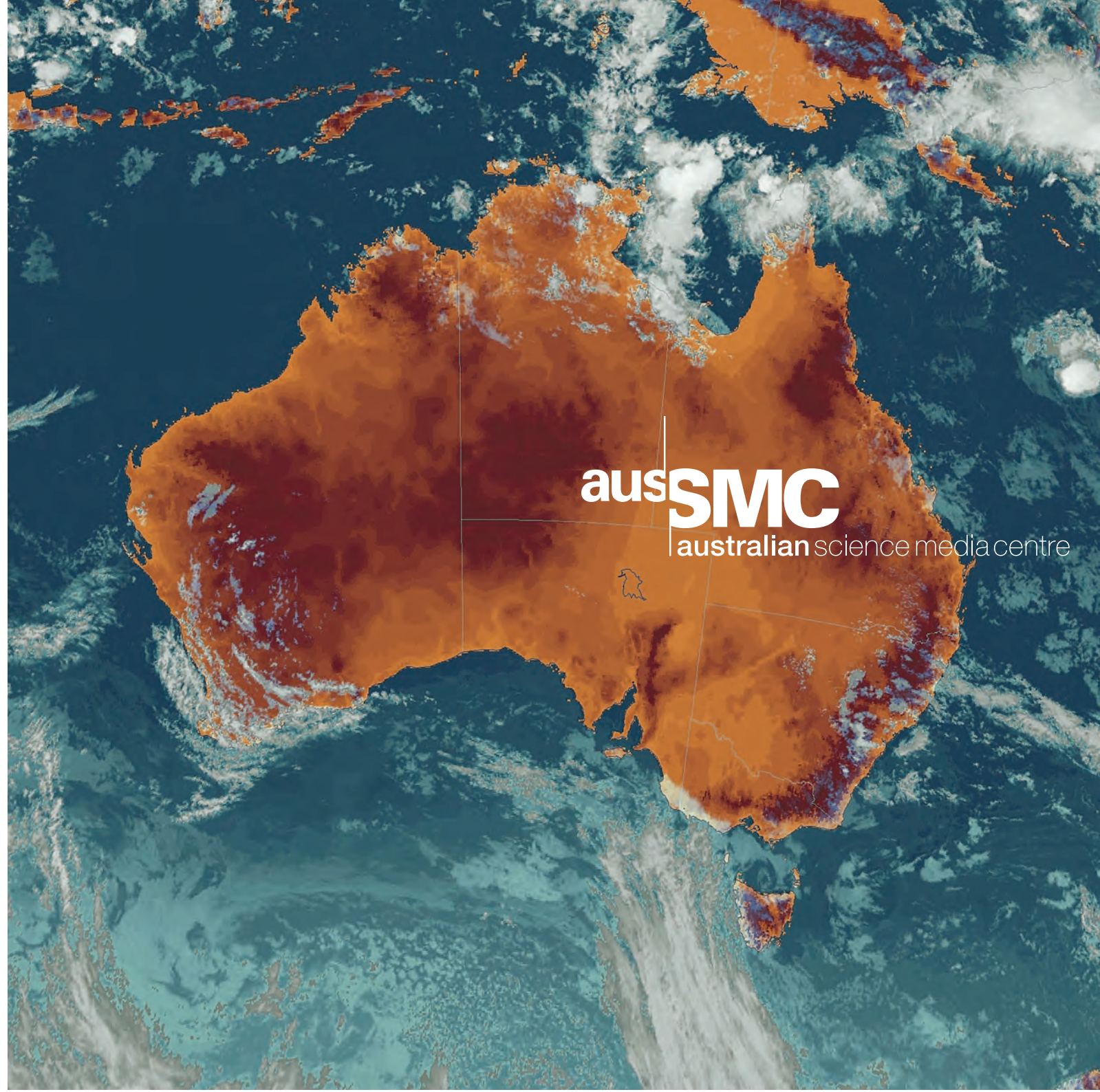
Foundation Sponsors



Gold Sponsors



Supporters



Left: Satellite image originally processed by the Bureau of Meteorology from the geostationary satellite MTSAT-1R operated by the Japan Meteorological Agency. Below: Strip Photos © iStockphoto.com

INTRO

Our philosophy

The Australian Science Media Centre (AusSMC) believes scientists can make a big impact on the way issues are covered in the media.

By building bridges that help the scientific community to engage with journalists, the AusSMC supports scientists to take more initiative and play a leading role in informing public debate.



Climate change, energy, swine flu and water scarcity are just a few of the big issues that need bold solutions from a public empowered by knowledge.

The AusSMC is a non-profit organisation that represents no particular faction in science. Its agenda is simply to utilise evidence-based science to shed light on issues and present a broad spectrum of scientific opinion.



WHAT IS THE

“ With access to the best scientific brains, many of whom are good communicators, the AusSMC provides a wonderful service and is eminently worthy of support.”

Emeritus Professor Sir Gustav Nossal AC CBE,
University of Melbourne

Left: TV news cameras and journalists attending an AusSMC briefing in Sydney.

AusSMC?

The AusSMC has gained a reputation for being fast and accurate, and for delivering good science in the form and time-frame needed for news.

The AusSMC IS:

- **Independent** – With a broad range of sponsors and by capping individual contributions to 10% of total operating costs, the AusSMC is able to provide an independent service and a spectrum of opinion from the scientific community without fear or favour.
- **Media driven** – While most issues we cover are driven by the level of media interest, the AusSMC also plays a role in providing journalists with heads-up on emerging issues.
- **Proactive** – The AusSMC is constantly 'horizon scanning' looking for situations where science can help clarify an issue.
- **Collaborative** – When scientists from different institutions are involved with the same media story, the AusSMC can provide an independent platform, enabling coordinated distribution of the message to the media.

The AusSMC IS NOT:

- A distribution service for institutional media releases;
- Responsible for increasing the profile of specific concepts or areas of science (eg: chemistry, physics etc) in the media;
- A PR agency for institutions that do not have access to a media office;
- Set up to take general enquiries directly from the public or non-media institutions.



HOW WE OPERATE

“ The live-stream was great! It was so convenient for me to listen in... I had my story natted out well before Melbourne fed the vision to us.”

Emily Rice, Environment Reporter,
Ten News Sydney

The AusSMC operates from Adelaide with four full time and two casual staff headed by CEO Dr Susannah Elliott. While most enquiries are received during office hours, the national centre is on call 24 hours a day for significant breaking stories and emergencies.

Rapid Reaction

Flu outbreaks, plane crashes, cancer clusters, earthquakes. When science is in the news AusSMC staff round up comments from relevant experts for immediate distribution to media outlets around the nation.

These quotes are used either directly by journalists in their stories, for follow up interviews or as a barometer of where individual scientists stand on an issue.

Left: At Healesville Sanctuary, Milson the platypus takes centre stage at an AusSMC media briefing to coincide with the platypus genome being published in Nature.

Below: Left to right: AusSMC staff - Nigel Kerby, CEO Dr Susannah Elliott, Annie Hastwell, Brad Cameron, Lyndal Byford and Marilyn Arnold.

AusSMC staff use a growing database of media friendly experts who have the answers, who are ready to comment, and who won't blind you with science.

National media briefings

When issues emerge or stories need more depth, the AusSMC runs national briefings for journalists in cities around Australia. Experts are targeted to give short presentations and answer media questions with time set aside for one-on-one interviews.

All briefings are now streamed live over the internet making them easily accessible to journalists throughout the country.

Media enquiries

Assisting journalists in finding a suitable expert for their story is all part of a normal day for the AusSMC. The Centre maintains a growing network of contacts that helps locate the right expert quickly.



Website

The AusSMC website (www.aussmc.org) is updated constantly and has proven to be a valuable resource for journalists and scientists.

There's an archive of information and quotes on recent hot topics and briefings, nutshells, science blogs and more.

Nutshells

From bird flu and stem cells, to genetics and geosequestration, these easy to read backgrounders are compiled for general reporters that need to grasp the facts quickly.

They are overseen by scientists widely acknowledged for their work in those fields.



LOWERING THE BLOOD

ALCOHOL LIMIT

Lower alcohol limit supported

0.02 'inevitable'
REDUCING Australia's blood-alcohol limit for drivers to 0.02 is probably inevitable, a public health expert said yesterday.

Drive for 0.02 alcohol limit gains support

Alcohol 0.02 limit 'fated'

0.02 blood-alcohol limit inevitable, says expert

Experts back shift to 0.02 driver limit

Reducing blood alcohol cut-off 'would send signal to motorists

Move to 0.02 blood alcohol limit 'inevitable'

REDUCING the blood alcohol limit for drivers to .02 is inevitable, according to a leading health expert.

Drastic measures to cut road carnage

Experts urge .02 booze limit

'The case for 0.02 is that it sends out the message loud and clear we can no longer tolerate the carnage caused by drink-driving

CASE STUDY / March 2010

Left and below: Alcoholic drinks and breathalyser Images ©iStockphoto.com

RAPID ROUND UP



Should Australia consider a drop in the allowable blood alcohol limit to lower the road toll?

When the Queensland Premier released a discussion paper recommending a drop in the allowable blood alcohol limit for drivers from .05 to .02, media leapt on the story. The AusSMC seized the moment and located four key experts in the areas of public health, issuing their reaction to hundreds of journalists around the country within hours. Their comments were widely published as the debate unfolded on radio, in metro and regional newspapers and more than 60 articles online.

The Centre's ability to inject evidence based expert comment into the news cycle helps shape and inform public debate in day-to-day news.

Photo courtesy Sarah Reed, The Advertiser

IS AUSTRALIA STILL IN

The harsh truth about SA's water

DROUGHT?

Growers desperate for rain, but outlook is grim

No more drought: it's a 'permanent dry'

Irrigators face worst summer ever

Future grim with no end in sight to long drought

Drought is not over

Country may never fully recover

“We don't know when this low water in flow is going to end...We're in a time of unprecedented low water availability.

- DR WENDY CRAIK

'Grim outlook' for rain

Drought recovery unlikely as climate change sets in

Facing the new drought reality

CASE STUDY / Autumn 2008

Below: Journalists attending an AusSMC drought briefing in Melbourne

NATIONAL MEDIA BRIEFING



At the end of Summer 2008, the AusSMC detected some confusion in the community about the state of the current drought in southern and eastern Australia.

While much of eastern Australia was mopping up from heavy rain, many communities were facing some of the toughest water restrictions ever.

The AusSMC approached key scientists and organisations including the Bureau of Meteorology and Murray Darling Basin Commission and a national media briefing was organised to coincide with the release of summer data.

The briefing and associated publicity resulted in more than 140 media articles and stories around Australia. Coverage included most major TV Networks, capital city newspaper dailies and at least 72 online articles.



HOW CAN I GET

“ There are experts out there that journalists would never connect with if it wasn't for the AusSMC.”

Kate Jones, [Herald Sun](#), [News Ltd.](#)

INVOLVED?

The AusSMC runs an independent service for Australian print, broadcast and online journalists who need assistance finding the right scientist for their story.

The Centre also collaborates with media officers and scientists.

If you are a journalist:

Journalists are encouraged to register with the AusSMC to receive media alerts and rapid roundups by email.

Registered journalists will also be given advanced notice on some embargoed science papers considered newsworthy.

To register, follow the links at www.aus-smc.org

If you are a media officer:

Media officers belonging to science-based institutions provide a valuable link to some of the best science minds in Australia.

The AusSMC is constantly striving to keep its list of science contacts up-to-date. If you are a media officer in this category and have had no previous contact with the AusSMC, we'd love to hear from you.

If you are a scientist:

While most of the scientists on our database of experts have been recommended by their peers or have published in peer-reviewed journals, we are always on the lookout for fresh and emerging names in the scientific community.

Feel free to contact us if you would like to nominate yourself or can recommend a media savvy colleague who you think should be on our database.

Below: Baroness Professor Susan Greenfield, founder and patron of the AusSMC, and Peter Yates, Chairman of the AusSMC Board (Photos courtesy Campbell Brodie, The Advertiser).

WHO IS BEHIND THE CENTRE?

The AusSMC is based on the UK's acclaimed Science Media Centre (SMC), an initiative of Baroness Professor Susan Greenfield, well-known British Neuro-scientist.



The Centre was inspired by the Baroness during her period as an Adelaide Thinker in Residence in 2004-5 and she is now its patron. AusSMC Chairman and mentor is prominent Melbourne businessman and science communication enthusiast, Peter Yates.

The Centre was officially launched by South Australian Premier, the Hon Mike Rann, and Baroness Greenfield on 2 August, 2005 and opened for business on 28 November the same year. It is governed by a Board of Management and advised by a panel of eminent scientists.

Contact Details: Australian Science Media Centre

Telephone: 08 7120 8666

(from overseas: +61 8 7120 8666)

Facsimile: 08 8231 7333

Email: info@aussmc.org

Web: www.aussmc.org

Street address: The Science Exchange,
55 Exchange Place, Adelaide SA 5000, Australia

THE BOARD

The Board

The AusSMC Board is chaired by **Peter Yates**, and meets four times a year.

Members of the Board

Peter Yates (AusSMC Chair)

non-executive Director of Peony Capital Ltd

Professor Gavin Brown

Director, RIAus

Jim Carroll (AusSMC Deputy Chair)

Head of News and Public Affairs,
Network Ten

John Croll

Chief Executive Officer, Media Monitors

Dr John Curran

General Manager: Communication, CSIRO

Rob Douglas

COO, ResMed Inc

Michael Ellies

Representing APN News and Media Ltd

The Hon Jodi McKay MP

Minister for Science and Medical Research,
NSW Government

Fiona Fox

Director, UK Science Media Centre

Dr Graham Mitchell

(AusSMC Deputy Chair)

Chief Scientist,
State Government of Victoria

Graeme Liebelt

Managing Director and CEO, Orica Ltd

Garry Linnell

Editor, Daily Telegraph, News Ltd

Melvin Mansell

Editor, The Advertiser, News Ltd

Professor Rob Morrison

Freelance science communicator

The Hon Mike Rann MP

Premier of South Australia

Professor Peter Rathjen

Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research),
The University of Melbourne

Robyn Williams

Presenter, Science Show, ABC

Oliver Yates

Macquarie Group

Professor John Yovich

Innovative Research Universities
Australia. Vice Chancellor,
Murdoch University

SCIENCE ADVISORY PANEL

Science Advisory Panel (SAP)

The work of the AusSMC is helped by an eminent group of science advisors. The Science Advisory Panel represents significant areas of scientific endeavour and meets with Board members once a year. These scientists guide the Centre on future directions and are encouraged to keep in regular contact with staff to share their knowledge and experience.

Science Advisory Panel

members include:

Professor Peter Andrews AO

Queensland Chief Scientist

Professor Snow Barlow

University of Melbourne

Professor Robin Batterham AO

Australian Academy of Technological
Sciences and Engineering

Professor Lyn Beazley

Chief Scientist of Western Australia

Emeritus Professor Max Brennan AO

Former Chief Scientist for South Australia

Professor Adrienne Clarke AC

University of Melbourne

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

Emeritus Professor Frank Fenner

AC CMG MBE

Australian National University

Professor Tim Flannery

Macquarie University

Dr Catherine Foley

Federation of Australian Scientific
and Technological Societies

Professor Bryan Gaensler

University of Sydney

Baroness Professor

Susan Greenfield CBE

Oxford University

Professor Richard Head

CSIRO Preventative Health Flagship Program

Professor Robert Hill

SA Museum and University of Adelaide

Professor Marcia Langton AM

University of Melbourne

Emeritus Professor Ian Lowe AO

Griffith University and President, ACF

Professor Caroline McMillen

University of South Australia

Emeritus Professor Nancy Millis

AC MBE

University of Melbourne

Emeritus Professor Sir Gustav Nossal

AC CBE

University of Melbourne

Professor Linda Rosenman

Council for the Humanities,
Arts and Social Sciences

Professor Michelle Simmons

University of New South Wales

Professor Fiona Stanley AC

Telethon Institute for Child Health Research

Professor Patricia Vickers-Rich

Monash University

Professor Malcolm Walter

Director, Australian Centre for Astrobiology,
University of New South Wales

Professor Bob Williamson AO

University of Melbourne

“ This is an
excellent initiative.

It has helped shape our
coverage of issues as
diverse as drought,
nuclear power and the
death of Steve Irwin.”

Richard Pullin,
Reuters Australia Bureau Chief

www.aussmc.org