

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH, 1998

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Directors

Dr Steven Wesselingh, President
Dr Matthew Gillespie, President-elect
Dr Judy Halliday, Honorary Secretary
Dr Peter O'Loughlin, Honorary Treasurer
Dr Carol Armour
Dr Moira Clay
Dr Bruce Lyons
Dr John Mamo
Dr Robert Ramsay
Dr Jason Smythe
Dr Peter Schofield
Executive Officer - Catherine West

PRESIDENT'S REPORT - Dr Steven Wesselingh

1998 has been a very successful year for ASMR. This year the ASMR Board, Cath West (Executive Officer) and the membership have worked extremely hard to ensure that Medical Research and Medical Research Funding have remained high on the political agenda. ASMR has continued to have a major input into the development of medical research policy and in ensuring adequate levels of funding. To achieve this the Society has received strong support from its affiliate, associate and corporate members. In addition, the Society is grateful for the ongoing support of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians. The RACP provide office space and other administrative resources which represent a substantial commitment and benefit to ASMR.

The areas in which ASMR has had greatest involvement - *Australian Medical Research Budget, Wills Review, Grantnet, Medical Research Week, NHMRC Peer Review Changes, Federal Election, Private Investment in Medical Research*

Budget Campaign - The 1997 Federal Budget saw small increases in allocations to Government funded peer reviewed grant schemes. However, what worried medical researchers around Australia was the forward projections on the NHMRC budget which indicated a 25% decline in funding over the next 3 years. In response to these projections ASMR requested financial support from its Affiliates for a media and lobbying campaign. The response from our affiliate members was extremely supportive. The total raised was more than \$50,000, and with this financial backing ASMR commenced a campaign to convince the federal government to increase medical research funding to 5% of health care spending. In particular we hoped to convince the government to fund NHMRC at a level that will enable it to achieve its goals; NHMRC should be seen as the jewel in the government's medical research crown. This would clearly require a significant increase in funding. We believe a doubling of NHMRC funding would be appropriate. ASMR's campaign was successful in that the projected 30% reduction in NHMRC funding was avoided and an ongoing base level commitment was established at around \$165 million per annum (indexed). ASMR will continue to lobby to achieve a doubling of NHMRC funding.

Wills Review - Our submission to the Wills Review was very well received. ASMR's views have been sought and widely quoted by many interested stakeholders in their own submissions. We expect Wills Strategic Review of Medical Research in Australia is to report to Dr Wooldridge in November/December 1998.

Medical Research Week - 1998 was an outstanding success. Prof. Peter Doherty, through his lectures and talks, has inspired the research community to pursue science with increased vigour. The Board of Directors of ASMR has recommended that Prof. Doherty be elected to Life Membership of the Society at the Annual General Meeting in November.

Federal Election - During the course of the election campaign, we made a number of submissions to both parties, including the production of a document outlining ASMR's Medical Research Platform, for which we requested bipartisan support. This document was summarised in a substantial article in the Weekend Australian in the middle of the campaign. In addition we made a number of press releases on significant issues such as Labor's Telstra Dividend proposal. ASMR also endeavoured to raise the profile of H&MR with the general public. A brochure, encouraging the 'end users' of H&MR to make contact with their local MP's and highlight the need for increased funding was distributed to 10,000 people through the assistance and co-operation of our associate members. Unfortunately Medical Research never became one of the major issues of the election, but we did keep it on the agenda and continued personal contact with both the Government and Opposition.

NHMRC peer review changes/ Grantnet - ASMR have been intimately involved in analysing the problems associated with Grantnet and in developing new strategies for peer review in 1999. We have argued for the changes to be made slowly and with full consultation. We believe that the format for 1999 will be acceptable to most medical researchers and will provide a high level of effective peer review.

Private investment in medical research - On the 15th of October, Richard Larkins (Chair NHMRC) and Nick Birrell (County Investments) announced a new partnership in the funding and commercialisation of Australian Medical Research. ASMR supported this initiative and feels, if it is successful, it will provide increased funding for young researchers.

Enterprise bargaining - Enterprise bargaining outcomes have become an issue of major concern to medical researchers around Australia. The main issues are inadequate representation of particular groups, and inadequate provisions of funds to cover the costs of the new agreements. ASMR's response has been to facilitate communication between medical researchers from different institutions. Communication is critical; the central tenet of enterprise bargaining is that each institution and each group of employees must undergo their own negotiations and formulate their own responses.

NSC

The last major event on the ASMR calendar is the National Scientific Meeting in Hobart. This meeting has been extremely well organised by the local organising committee and I would like to congratulate Bruce Lyons and his LOC for the effort they have put in. In order to provide a larger stage for young medical researchers to present their work, it is our intention to encourage the development of a FASEB style meeting every 4/5 years. We hope to encourage a number of research societies to participate in this meeting which would provide additional advantages for trade and corporate sponsors and in the attraction of international speakers. A number of affiliated societies have already expressed an interest and it is hoped the first meeting could take place in 2002.

Finally I would like to thank Cath West and the Board for their support during the year. In particular I would like to highlight the contributions of Cath West our Executive Officer, Judy Halliday, Honorary Secretary, Peter O'Loughlin, Honorary Treasurer, Rob Ramsay, Newsletter Editor and Matt Gillespie, President Elect. I am confident that Matt will lead the Society through another very successful year.

Steven Wesselingh
President ASMR
November 1998

PAST PRESIDENTS

1961	BG Firkin	1980	GG Duggin
1962	AP Skyring	1981	RL Dawkins
1963	RP Shearman	1982	JK Findlay
1964	G Archer	1983	JA Eisman
1965	J McRae	1984	JA Whitworth
1966	AWT Edwards	1985	BM Hall
1967	MR Playoust	1986	GC Farrell
1968	PJ Nestel	1987	RL Sutherland
1969	PJ Nestel	1988	JG McDougall
1970	PA Castaldi	1989	NH Hunt
1971	JR Turtle	1990	JJ Finlay-Jones
1972	WJ O'Sullivan	1991	MJ Field
1973	TJ Martin	1992	PH Hart
1974	JK Healy	1993	WD Tilley
1975	JP Chalmers	1994	CL Clarke
1976	AA Morley	1995	S Clark
1977	NG Ardlie	1996	G Mann
1978	A Basten	1997	K Scott
1979	JW Funder	1998	S Wesselingh

Affiliate Members

Association of Australian Medical Research Institutes
 Australasian Association of Clinical Biochemists
 Australasian Menopause Society
 Australasian Society for Free Radical Research
 Australasian Society for HIV Medicine Inc
 Australasian Society for Immunology
 Australasian Society for Infectious Diseases
 Australasian Society for the Study of Hypertension in Pregnancy
 Australasian Society of Blood Transfusion
 Australasian Society of Clinical and Experimental Pharmacologists and Toxicologists
 Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy
 Australian Atherosclerosis Society
 Australian and New Zealand Bone and Mineral Society
 Australian and New Zealand Society for Cell & Developmental Biology
 Australian and New Zealand Society of Nephrology
 Australian Association of Neurologists
 Australian Diabetes Society
 Australian Neuroscience Society
 Australian Physiological and Pharmacological Society
 Australian Rheumatology Association
 Australian Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
 Australian Society for Psychiatric Research
 Australian Society for Reproductive Biology
 Australian Society for the Study of Obesity
 Cardiac Society of Australia and New Zealand
 Clinical Oncology Society of Australia
 Endocrine Society of Australia
 Fertility Society of Australia
 Gastroenterological Society of Australia
 Haematology Society of Australia
 High Blood Pressure Research Council of Australia
 Human Genetics Society of Australasia
 National Association of Research Fellows
 Paediatric Research Society of Australia
 Perinatal Society of ANZ
 Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand
 Transplantation Society of Australia and New Zealand

Supporting Members

Amrad Corporation Ltd
Amrad Biotech
Biota Holdings Limited
Bristol-Myers Squibb Pharm. Pty Ltd
C S L Limited
Johnson & Johnson Rsh Pty Ltd
Pfizer Pty Ltd
Roche Products Pty Ltd
Servier Laboratories (Aust) Pty Ltd

Associate Members

Arthritis Foundation of Australia
Australian Kidney Foundation
Australian Cystic Fibrosis Association
Community Health & Anti-Tuberculosis Association
Haemophilia Foundation of Australia
Muscular Dystrophy Association of S A Inc
National Heart Foundation of Australia
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
Juvenile Diabetes Fndn of Australia
Australian Red Cross Blood Service

ASMR Annual General Meeting

Tuesday November 24, 1998
4-30 pm to 5:30 pm
Wrest Point Convention Centre, Hobart, Tasmania

AGENDA

1. Welcome to all Members and Apologies - Dr Steven Wesselingh
2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Tuesday November 25, 1997 - Dr Steven Wesselingh
3. President's Report - Dr Steven Wesselingh
4. Treasurer's Report - Dr Peter O'Loughlin
5. ASMR Research Fund - Dr Peter O'Loughlin
6. Reports from Subcommittees
 - a) Research Careers - Dr Jason Smythe
 - b) Membership - Dr Carol Armour
 - c) PR /Communications & Publications - Dr R Ramsay
 - d) State Report - Dr Steve Wesselingh
 - e) National Scientific Conference 1998 - Dr Bruce Lyons
7. Election of Life Member - Board of Directors of ASMR propose Dr Peter Doherty for Life Membership
8. Venue for the NSC 1999 - Dr Peter Schofield
9. The National Scientific Conference 2000 - Dr Matthew Gillespie
10. General Business
11. Office Bearers for 1999

Judy Halliday - Honorary Secretary

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE AUSTRALIAN
SOCIETY FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH, HELD AT THE ADELAIDE
CONVENTION CENTRE ON NOVEMBER 25, 1997**

Item 1 - Welcome and Apologies

Dr Kieran Scott, ASMR President 1997, opened the meeting, welcoming all present and accepting apologies from Professor John Funder, Dr Graham Mann, Dr Gary Buffinton, Professor Warwick Anderson, Professor Richard Larkins, A/Professor Sue Tett and Dr Liz Johnson.

Item 2 - Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Tuesday November 26, 1996

Dr Judy Halliday moved that the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of November 26, 1996 be accepted as a true and accurate reflection of that Meeting and this was seconded by Dr Rob Ramsay.

Item 3 - President's Report - Dr Kieran Scott

Dr Kieran Scott referred the Meeting to his President's Report as it appears in the Annual Report of the Society and went on to briefly summarise and highlight some of the activities and achievements of the past year.

The Society, Dr Scott said, has been enormously successful in terms of maintaining a high profile. He spoke of the concern expressed by Professor Judith Whitworth when addressing the Annual General Meeting last year, regarding the NSW Cancer Council. This issue has been satisfactorily resolved with ASMR now having a representative on that Council. Grants from the NSW Cancer Council which were in question have gone ahead. This success is due largely to the broad representation and support of the ASMR Affiliate Membership.

Achieving success in the federal political arena is more difficult but this is the primary task to be addressed. The Society has hired a lobbyist to help represent the interest of the H&MR community to government, particularly in the lead up to the budget and the Federal election. ASMR believes that maintaining the status quo is not enough and we have set in place a process to double funding through NHMRC and to increase funding generally to 5% of total health expenditure. We need to give the politicians the chance to do this over a five year period.

The Society, Dr Scott said, is in a healthy state. Membership continues to grow and in the newly established Associate membership group, we now have nine members which gives us a network to the 'end users' of research and will allow greater lobbying capacity in the future.

Dr Scott thanked the eight Directors who formed the 1997 Board and extended his best wishes to Dr Steve Wesselingh and the 1998 Board of Directors. Dr Christine Clarke asked if forward projections would be likely to impact on Grants this year or next. Dr Scott responded by advising that Grants for this year are in place but that his own Grant contained a disclaimer which states that a continuing commitment is subject to the availability of funds in future years. Dr Scott went on to report that the Minister is supportive but is only one member of Cabinet; H&MR is competing against other interests, hence the targeting of other members of Cabinet in this campaign to increase funding.

Dr Matthew Gillespie moved that the President's Report be accepted; seconded by Dr Judy Halliday.

Item 4 - Treasurer's Report - Dr Matthew Gillespie

Dr Gillespie advised the Meeting that the accounts were audited by P J St Clair & Co Pty Ltd and are contained in the Annual Report of the Society. He referred to the annual profit of around \$13000 each year which is basically due to the profitability of the National Scientific Conference. Dr Gillespie reported that costs and donations in the conduct of the budget campaign operate as separate items of account. Dr Gillespie thanked Cath West for her support throughout the year.

Dr Christine Clarke asked if there was a likelihood members would be asked for donations to support lobbying. Dr Scott responded with the advice that Affiliate, Associate members and other stakeholders had donated funds to support the initial phase of the campaign and it was not anticipated that there would be a need to call on members for additional support.

Dr Kieran Scott moved that the Treasurer's Report be accepted, seconded by Dr Judy Halliday.

Item 5 - ASMR Research Fund - Dr Matthew Gillespie

Dr Gillespie reported that the fund contained \$24528 on June 30 1997. Responding to a question from the floor, Dr Kieran Scott advised that the Research Fund had been set up some years ago to support research and research related activities. It has in the past been used to fund student travel grants. Legal advice indicates this is not a good use of the fund because of possible difficulties with the Australian Taxation Office due to the tax deductible status of donations. The Society is looking at overcoming this problem by providing 'grants in aid' rather than travel grants. It is the intention to eventually be in a position to fund fellowships and competitive grants.

Dr Kieran Scott moved the report be accepted; seconded by Dr Judy Halliday.

Item 6 - Reports from Subcommittees

a) Research Careers - Dr Judy Halliday

Dr Judy Halliday advised there were no major projects in train for 1997. The committee is working on a discussion paper on hospital scientists which is being coordinated by Dr Peter O'Loughlin. There will be an analysis of data collected for the 'brain drain' survey next year. Dr Halliday advised that the activities of the Research Careers Committee in the coming year will focus on enterprise bargaining and asked that anyone who wished to have input into this or other areas of career development contact a Committee or Board member.

b) Membership - Dr Bruce Lyons

Dr Bruce Lyons reported that the Society had 967 financial members and that there were about a hundred more who have not yet renewed but will probably do so before the cut off point in December. ASMR has 950 email addresses for members and similar numbers of electoral addresses, the latter being very helpful in the implementation of the budget campaign. The Society has thirty five Affiliate Members, ten Supporting Members and nine Associate Members. Dr Lyons completed his report by requesting members encourage colleagues to join.

c) Public Relations/Communications and Publications - Dr Matthew Gillespie, Dr Rob Ramsay, Dr John Mamo

Dr Rob Ramsay reported that the combination of Public Relations/Communications and Publications has worked reasonably well over the past year. He advised that the Society is moving toward quarterly publication of the Newsletter and asked for input from members on any issues they would wish to have raised in this forum. Dr Ramsay reminded members that all directors are accessible via E-mail. Part of the task taken on board by the three directors responsible for this portfolio involves communication. Dr Ramsay said this is an important element in the budget campaign and expressed the hope that members would see positive outcomes in this area over the next few months.

d) State Reports - Dr Kieran Scott

Dr Scott advised the Meeting that the Board of Directors receive regular updates on state finances and activities. NSW and Victoria continue to have strong membership. Queensland is growing dramatically and Western Australia has a vigorous membership under the leadership of John Mamo. Tasmania is looking forward to hosting the National Scientific Conference and South Australia is in a strong position. We have an increasing number of international members, due largely to electronic communication. It is the intention of the Board to continue and expand interaction with the states to assist overall co-ordination of the activities of the Society.

e) National Scientific Conference 1997 - Dr Peter O'Loughlin

Dr Peter O'Loughlin advised the Meeting that final figures on the financial aspect of the conference were not yet available. He reported that there were 300 registrants, 180 papers, a profit of \$5000 or more and that there would be a full report in the next Newsletter. Dr O'Loughlin thanked members of the Local Organising Committee - Moira Clay, Bill Kalionis, David Leavesley, Sarah Robertson, Joe Simonetta, Steve Wesselingh and in the early days Jacky Bentel.

Dr Scott thanked and congratulated Dr O'Loughlin and the LOC.

Item 7 - Venue for the National Scientific Conference 1998 - Dr Bruce Lyons

Dr Bruce Lyons reported that planning for the 1998 Hobart Conference at Wrest Point Casino is well underway with an interesting program being developed. Dr Lyons closed by encouraging all to attend.

Item 8 - Venue for the National Scientific Conference 1999 - Dr Kieran Scott

Dr Kieran Scott advised the Meeting that Sydney would host the 1999 National Scientific Conference.

Item 9 - General Business

1. Dr Judy Halliday announced that ASMR's Executive Secretary Cath West has been promoted to Executive Officer.
2. Dr Wayne Phillips asked for clarification of the process for the election of directors in view of the two year term of office effective from 1997. Dr Kieran Scott replied that there would be an election in 1998 for at least one Board position and there will be elections each year, but not for all the Board.

Item 10 - Office Bearers for 1998

The Society, Dr Wesselingh said, is at an all time high in its standing scientifically and politically. Kieran Scott is partly responsible for this but there is a need to look back over the last ten to fifteen years at the people who have put many initiatives in place. Kieran came in at a difficult time with the NSW Cancer Council and clearly handled this well; he set up the political campaign and involved Steve Woodward. This campaign is a critical one in the life of the Society. In addition, Kieran has been intimately involved in the national focus on MRW, inviting Professor Peter Doherty to participate in MRW in all states, highlighting ASMR as a leader in the community. Dr Steve Wesselingh thanked Dr Scott for his outstanding work as President.

Dr Wesselingh announced the new Board for 1998 -

Dr Matt Gillespie, President-Elect, National MRW
Dr Judy Halliday, Honorary Secretary
Dr Peter O'Loughlin, Honorary Treasurer
Dr Bruce Lyons, NSC 1998
Dr Rob Ramsay, Newsletter/Publications, National MRW
Dr Carol Armour, Membership
Dr John Mamo, Policy development
Dr Jason Smythe, Enterprise bargaining - coordinator
Dr Peter Schofield, Enterprise bargaining, Policy development
Dr Moira Clay, Sponsorship, Enterprise bargaining

Dr Wesselingh congratulated the members of the new Board of Directors for 1998 and closed the Meeting at 4.40pm.