



## ANNUAL REPORT 1999



Dr Matt Gillespie

### PRESIDENT'S REPORT

1999 has been a challenging year for ASMR as well as one which will be remembered for fundamental changes in government policy on health and medical research (H&MR). Following the Federal election in 1998, we witnessed H&MR, in particular the NHMRC, adopted as a central platform in campaign policy to become the centrepiece for this year's federal budget. Much of the accepted change for H&MR was conceived by ASMR over the last ten years. ASMR's advocacy provided convincing arguments for the cause of H&MR to be championed by the Minister for Health and Aged Care, Dr Michael Wooldridge and Peter Wills in his capacity as Chairman of the Health and Medical Research Strategic Review (HMRSR). We heard also the calls from John Ralph to alter our antiquated tax system to make it more competitive on a global market and permit foreign investment in Australia, the majority of which would be focussed into

Australia's R&D sector.

The Society commissioned two polls this year. A NewsPoll on the public's attitude to health and medical research funding and the level of support it should receive. Information from this Poll was used for press releases during ASMR Medical Research Week™, and will be used for future news articles. The second Poll, The ASMR Workplace Survey, developed by Moira Clay, is the most comprehensive review of how Australian biomedical researchers regard their workplace conditions and what issues are foremost in their minds when seeking employment. This survey of 266 respondents extends our previous data, and will be used in future press releases.

### Politics and Funding

ASMR has, for several years, urged all political parties to be responsive to the emerging biotechnology industry by providing adequate funding to support the H&MR sector and ancillary industries. Our approach has been bipartisan. We gained the support of all parties for the 1993 federal election to support national expenditure on H&MR to two percent of total expenditure on health. However, "creative

accounting" through the inclusion of business sector investment allowed the government of the day to announce that Australia was currently supporting H&MR at a two percent level. With this history in mind, ASMR adopted the tangible and transparent goal of obtaining a commitment by all parties to double NHMRC allocations. To support such a commitment, the Society conducted a NewsPoll in March 1999 as an adjunct to the 1995 NewsPoll on community attitudes to Australian H&MR. The poll again confirmed community support for increased government assistance to the H&MR sector which was delivered in part by the May Budget. Public awareness and support for H&MR generated through ASMR Medical Research Week™, our information brochures and media coverage enabled the Society to orchestrate an educational program targeting politicians. This strategy both informed and encouraged government to seriously consider the H&MR sector and placed the HMRSR on the political agenda.

Undoubtedly the most crucial meeting attended by ASMR this year was with Peter Costello, the Federal Treasurer. This meeting occurred

---

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

continued

prior to the final composition and detail of the Federal Budget; the content of the discussions were directly relevant to Budget funding and Policy initiatives (doubling of NHMRC funding, Biotech Australia, shifting of GMAC, intellectual property support mechanisms and capital gains taxation). As a consequence of this meeting and ASMR's involvement in generating submissions for the HMRSR, our influential position as the peak body representing the health and medical research community was confirmed by the invitation from Dr Michael Wooldridge to Budget functions not previously accessible.

ASMR has adopted a positive attitude in discussions with all political parties. This strategy has resulted in a productive outcome in the current climate.

The commitment to double NHMRC fund allocations within five years has at last provided a stable funding base and the opportunity for H&MR in Australia to maintain its high international standing. We must continue our excellence in research and account various output parameters for future government support.

### NHMRC

It is common knowledge that the NHMRC is going through a "reshaping" process. The mechanisms of grant submission and review have changed dramatically. Behind the scenes alterations to ONHMRC have occurred.

The breadth of coverage engaged by each of the principal committees is not recognised by many researchers. ASMR's position as an observer on Council and Research Committee, has kept us informed and permitted involvement in the direction of proposed changes. The next two years will herald implementation of these changes which will mean a departure from our current funding mechanisms. I thank both Richard Larkins and Warwick Anderson for our many fruitful and open discussions over the past twelve months. Richard Larkins has been an outstanding Chair of Council, integrating and overseeing all Council activities. I commend him in that role.

As a consequence of the Federal Budget, the increase in appropriations to the NHMRC permits ONHMRC to project a five year plan, a luxury they have not been afforded in the past. This should translate to best management of financial, people and national research capacity for Australia.

The County Medical Research Investment Fund (CMRIF) has developed since its announcement in late 1998 with the signing of an agreement between the WEHI and County. This agreement indicates resolutions of a number of issues, including ownership and management of IP, the breadth of the research portfolio and the returns offered to investors and the research sector. These issues were identified during the developmental phase of CMRIF and discussion papers

are presented on the NHMRC and County home pages ([www.health.gov.au/nhmrc/wnew/new.htm](http://www.health.gov.au/nhmrc/wnew/new.htm); [www.county.com.au/mrif](http://www.county.com.au/mrif)). County has entered discussions with universities, and the proposed changes in capital gains taxation announced in the Ralph Report should be beneficial in attracting foreign investment into CMRIF.

### Implementation of HMRSR

The HMRSR was all but adopted by the Government, the one omission being for workplace Enterprise Bargain Agreements. The HMRSR Implementation Committee has been appointed, and will be chaired by Peter Wills. The committee is composed of scientists and business people. I anticipate that ASMR will be consulted further during the implementation process. One of the recommendations is to appoint a CEO of NHMRC. Since a new triennium starts in 2000, both a Chair and CEO need to be appointed.

### Enterprise Bargaining Agreements

Enterprise Bargaining (EB) Agreements are agreements which have been established between employers and employees as a mechanism of wage supplementation. In the past two years increments to EB across Universities and Institutes/Centres has been disproportionate and has created salary discrepancy. This discrepancy has been magnified by the salaries of research only staff being supplied by a party who is not our employer (eg., NHMRC, ARC, etc.). The NHMRC has

---

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

continued

clear policy that they are not an employer and only provide funds through Training Awards, Fellowships, Project, Program, Block Funding and Equipment grants. One line grants may provide a mechanism to support EBA, but this will erode the dollar value of a competitively attained grant. It is unknown whether other funding agencies (eg., Cancer Councils) propose to support EBA or adopt one line grants.

### Medical Research Week

The past two years have witnessed the development of ASMR Medical Research Week™ as a vehicle to provide a greater interface with the community and all sectors of the health and medical research community. We are indeed fortunate to have had ambassadors such as Peter Doherty (1998) and Ralph Bradshaw (1999) to tour Australia and espouse the values of H&MR to politicians, media and public, and the potential wealth that a vibrant industry could attract. The tours which were a focal point of ASMR-MRW™ were sponsored by AMRAD, and I particularly extend my thanks to John Grace and Michelle Singe for the working relationship which we developed over the course of the sponsorship, and to Mike Pickford and Maree Overall (ASN Pty. Ltd.) for overseeing the tour. To our other sponsors who are now realising the value of their sponsorship to ASMR, I hope that you remain committed to our future events.

The public image of ASMR has never been stronger with the development of Forums,

public lectures, secondary and tertiary students programs, and EXPOs at a number of venues throughout Australia. We must not lose sight that it is the Australian public we serve, and that their support influences our funding levels through government.

Ultimately, the credit for the success of ASMR-MRW™ resides with the local state branches who have developed new initiatives to enhance the week's events to provide a more dynamic interface with the community.

### 38th National Scientific Conference

I congratulate Levon Khachigian and the LOC on the program for this year. Levon has provided an excellent program of international and national speakers, interspersed with opportunities for those submitting abstracts to participate in "oral blitz's". The NSC has taken a radical departure from past NSC's to focus on new technologies providing an update course for new directions in research.

### The future

We have to thank the past Presidents and Directors of the Society who have positioned ASMR as the peak medical research organisation, which not only represents medical researchers but is also a voice in government and to the public. We boast our substantial representation of 15,000 researchers, our 37 supporting and affiliated societies, which when combined, represent

over 50,000 Australians. However, we must look to the future and develop ASMR's brief to be more interactive with the public, to facilitate interactions with other societies by such ventures as the Health and Medical Research Congress, to reignite the desire of children to participate in medical research, and to support the development of our allied disciplines in the physical and chemical sciences and law practices which have profound effects upon our sector. Stronger links to public health and consumer groups also need to be developed. These expanded activities of the Society occur against the backdrop of implementation of the HMRSR.

We must be cognisant of the output parameters for H&MR which we will be judged in three years time. This appraisal will determine if the doubling of the NHMRC fund allocations has provided a stimulus to H&MR. Our publication records over the next three years will not be the sole benchmark for measured success. We must actively accrue and audit our successes: publications, patents, commercial products, international funds attracted, calculate cost savings for altered practices, therapies or treatments. The results must be persuasive to the economist, and this information is essential for a case to support further increases in NHMRC allocations: indeed this information was essential for this year's Federal Budget result. A federal election will coincide with the planned review of outcomes in three

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

continued

years time.

ASMR is grateful for the ongoing support of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians. RACP provide office space and other administrative resources which represent a substantial commitment and benefit to the Society.

I have been privileged to work with a number of committed individuals on ASMR boards for the past four years. To the executive, Rob Ramsay, Peter O'Loughlin and Judy Halliday, your support has been invaluable, and I acknowledge the contributions that Judy has made to the Society with her level headed and business-like approach. To Cath and Lexy, thank you for keeping my work levels up while I tried to increase yours. We are indeed a fortunate Society to have two individuals in our Executive Office focussed on perfection and to advancement of the Society. Finally, to the members of my laboratory, thank you for understanding when the door was shut!

**Matthew Gillespie**  
**President ASMR**  
November, 1999

## Directors and Office Bearers 1999

Dr Matthew Gillespie, President  
Dr Rob Ramsay, President-elect  
Dr Judy Halliday, Hon Secretary  
Dr Peter O'Loughlin, Hon Treasurer  
Dr Carol Armour  
Dr Moira Clay  
Dr Bruce Lyons  
Dr John Mamo  
Dr Peter Schofield  
Dr Andrew Sinclair  
Dr Jason Smythe  
Executive Officer - Catherine West

## Past Presidents

BG Firkin	1961
AP Skyring	1962
RP Shearman	1963
G Archer	1964
J McRae	1965
AWT Edwards	1966
MR Playoust	1967
PJ Nestel	1968
PJ Nestel	1969
PA Castaldi	1970
JR Turtle	1971
WJ O'Sullivan	1972
TJ Martin	1973
JK Healy	1974
JP Chalmers	1975
AA Morley	1976
NG Ardlie	1977
A Basten	1978
JW Funder	1979
GG Duggin	1980
RL Dawkins	1981
JK Findlay	1982
JA Eisman	1983
JA Whitworth	1984
BM Hall	1985
GC Farrell	1986
RL Sutherland	1987
JG McDougall	1988
NH Hunt	1989
JJ Finlay-Jones	1990
MJ Field	1999
PH Hart	1992
WD Tilley	1993
CL Clarke	1994
S Clark	1995
G Mann	1996
K Scott	1997
S Wesselingh	1998
MTGillespie	1999

## Board Meetings

1999

## Schedule of Attendance by Directors

### NOVEMBER 21, 1998

Present: Dr Steve Wesselingh  
Dr Matt Gillespie  
Dr Judy Halliday  
Dr Peter O'Loughlin  
Dr Bruce Lyons  
Dr Jason Smyth  
Dr Peter Schofield  
Dr Moira Clay  
Dr John Mamo  
Dr Andrew Sinclair  
Dr Carol Armour

Apologies: Dr Rob Ramsay

### MARCH 19/20, 1999

Present: Dr Matthew Gillespie (Chair)  
Dr Judy Halliday  
Dr Rob Ramsay  
Dr Peter O'Loughlin  
Dr Bruce Lyons  
Dr Jason Smythe  
Dr Moira Clay  
Dr John Mamo  
Dr Peter Schofield  
Dr Carol Armour  
Dr Andrew Sinclair

### JULY 23, 1999

Present: Dr Matthew Gillespie (Chair)  
Dr Rob Ramsay  
Dr Judy Halliday  
Dr Peter O'Loughlin

### SEPTEMBER 20/21, 1999.

Present: Dr Matt Gillespie (Chair)  
Dr Rob Ramsay  
Dr Peter O'Loughlin  
Dr Carol Armour  
Dr Jason Smythe  
Dr John Mamo  
Dr Bruce Lyons,  
Dr Andrew Sinclair  
Dr Moira Clay  
Dr Peter Schofield  
Apologies: Dr Judy Halliday

## ASMR Annual General Meeting

Sunday 28th of November 1999

4:00 to 5:00pm

The Fairmont Resort, Leura, NSW

### AGENDA

- Item 1** Welcome and Apologies - Dr Matthew Gillespie
- Item 2** Confirmation of Minutes, Annual General Meeting of Nov 24, 1998 - Dr Matthew Gillespie
- Item 3** President's Report - Dr Matthew Gillespie
- Item 4** Treasurer's Report - Dr Peter O'Loughlin
- Item 5** ASMR Research Fund - Dr Peter O'Loughlin
- Item 6** Subcommittee Reports
- a) Research Careers - Dr Jason Smythe
  - b) Workplace Survey - Dr Moira Clay
  - c) Membership - Dr Carol Armour
  - d) Newsletter - Dr Jason Smythe
  - e) ASMR Medical Research Week - Dr Moira Clay/Dr Rob Ramsay
  - f) State Report - Dr Matthew Gillespie
  - g) National Scientific Conference 1999 - Dr Levon Khachigian
  - h) National Scientific Conference 2000 - Dr Andrew Sinclair
  - i) Health and Medical Research Congress - Dr Peter O'Loughlin
- Item 7** General Business
- Item 8** Office Bearers for 2000 - Dr Rob Ramsay

Judy Halliday - Honorary Secretary

### MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH, HELD AT WREST POINT CONVENTION CENTRE ON NOVEMBER 24, 1998, COMMENCING AT 4-30pm

**Item 1 - Welcome and Apologies**

Dr Steven Wesselingh, ASMR President 1998, opened the meeting, welcoming all present and in particular, Professor Warwick Anderson, Chair of the Research Committee, NHMRC. Professor Anderson, Dr Wesselingh announced, would

address the members at the conclusion of the AGM. Apologies from Dr Stella Clark, Dr Kieran Scott, Dr J McDougall, Professor Nick Hunt and Dr Julie Mercer.

**Item 2 - Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on November 26, 1997**  
Dr Steven Wesselingh moved

that the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on November 26, 1997 be accepted as a true and accurate reflection of that Meeting; seconded by Dr Judy Halliday.

**Item 3 - President's Report**  
Dr Wesselingh advised the Meeting that 1998 had been a

## AGM Minutes

continued

successful year for the Society which is now clearly identified as the peak body representing medical researchers around Australia. A number of influential bodies are turning to ASMR for advice and direction. He commended the efforts of the Board and State Committees in raising the profile of H&MR and ASMR. Dr Wesselingh referred to ASMR's significant input to the Wills Strategic Review of Health and Medical Research as a good example of the high regard the Society enjoys. The submission to the Wills Review has been widely quoted and utilised by a number of other organisations. The Committee has maintained close contact with ASMR throughout the review process seeking advice and comment.

Dr Wesselingh summarised other activities of the Society over the past year. The Budget Campaign, funded primarily by the affiliate membership, was successful in stopping the proposed cuts to NHMRC funding and establishing a new base line. Funding is clearly inadequate and ASMR have argued for a doubling of NHMRC funding over the next five years using as part of that argument, the increased allocation of funding to H&MR in other countries, particularly in the US where the National Institute of Health received an increase of 15%. Funding must increase significantly if research is to remain internationally competitive.

Medical Research Week 1998 was presented as a nationally

focused event. Dr Kieran Scott initiated the national focus by inviting Professor Peter Doherty to participate in a national lecture tour. Professor Doherty's lectures were inspirational and his input helped make the week an enormous success. The Board of Directors will be asking this Meeting to elect Professor Doherty to Honorary Life Membership of the Society.

During the election campaign, ASMR put together a Platform for Medical Research in Australia. This document was presented to all Members of Parliament, clearly establishing what the H&MR community is asking for. H&MR did not become a major issue during the election campaign but ASMR did obtain some good press results during that period.

ASMR has tried to facilitate the concerns of the H&MR community over changes to the NHMRC peer review process and problems with GrantNet. The Society was also involved in the announcement of the Medical Research Investment Fund and has expressed support for this initiative. ASMR will continue to disseminate information on enterprise bargaining and intellectual property issues.

Dr Wesselingh, referred to the success of the National Scientific Conference in Hobart and expressed his thanks to Dr Bruce Lyons and the Local Organising Committee. There have been a number of discussions on ways of improving the

conference and the feasibility of organising a 'FASEB' style meeting in the Y2002. All affiliated members have been contacted and there have been a number of expressions of interest. The Society will be moving forward on this proposal.

1998, Dr Wesselingh said, has been an outstanding year with achievements building on the efforts of previous Boards. Dr Wesselingh thanked all members of the Board and the Executive Officer, Cath West for their support. He thanked particularly, Rob Ramsay for his work on the Newsletter, Matt Gillespie for his enormous effort and the Executive Directors, Judy Halliday and Peter O'Loughlin.

### Item 4 - Treasurer's Report

Dr Peter O'Loughlin referred to the Financial Statements contained within the Annual Report and briefly summarised for the Meeting. Increased expenditure in some areas occurred as a result of the purchase of new computer equipment, publication of one extra newsletter and the printing of the 1997 Annual Report. The operating loss of \$13600 is overcome by the net income from the 1997 National Scientific Conference which amounted to \$13800, creating a break even situation. The consolidated assets of State Committees, Dr O'Loughlin reported, is healthy with over \$100,000 held in various accounts.

### Item 5 - ASMR Research Fund

Dr Peter O'Loughlin advised that the Research Fund had received \$3751 in donations,

including a contribution from ASMR to promote the Fund. The Society is currently looking for sponsorship to fund a feasibility study by Fund Management Consultants Pty Ltd to move forward and increase available funds.

Dr Judy Halliday moved that The Treasurer's Report and the ASMR Research Fund Report be accepted; seconded by Dr Jason Smythe.

#### **Item 6 - Reports from Sub-Committees**

##### *a) Research Careers - Dr Jason Smythe*

Dr Smythe spoke of concerns in respect of enterprise bargaining and ASMR's role of collating and disseminating information. He referred to the summary prepared by Dr Moira Clay and circulated to the membership. More data is needed, particularly from institutes. ASMR has encountered difficulty in obtaining information from the institutes and will be adopting some new strategies which it is hoped will enable us to provide the membership with useful facts and figures. The Brain Drain survey is to be revisited. Useful information was collected previously and ASMR will update the survey early next year. The updated survey will also extract information which identifies people who give up science.

##### *b) Membership - Dr Carol Armour*

Dr Armour requested members remain mindful that ASMR's strength is in its membership and this is one of the reasons politicians listen to what the Society has to say. ASMR is not wealthy and

does rely upon the ongoing financial support of ordinary members to survive. This year ASMR conducted a program to attract more corporate sponsorship. The outcome was disappointing and the main problem is there is not a clearly defined product to sell. There will be another attempt next year using a new strategy. Dr Armour asked those members who have not yet renewed their subscription to do so before the end of December.

##### *c) PR/Communications & Publications - Dr Rob Ramsay*

Dr Ramsay referred to the Newsletter as being one of the major PR tools of the Society. The Newsletter has changed and improved over the last few years; the publication is shorter, coloured and has a strong political slant. Costs were greater than the previous year because of the four editions and the Board has decided to go back to three per annum. The skills learned in assembling the Newsletter allowed the quick production of a professional document to present to all politicians during the Federal Election campaign. The ASMR Platform for Health & Medical Research clearly spelled out what we want from government. Dr Ramsay advised the Meeting that Dr Jason Smythe would be taking over as Newsletter Editor next year and encouraged members to submit items for publication.

##### *d) State Reports - Dr Steve Wesselingh*

Dr Wesselingh reported that the State Committees had done excellent work throughout the year, particularly during Medical Research

Week which was an outstanding success and raised the profile of ASMR and H&MR. He warmly congratulated the State Committees.

##### *e) National Scientific Meeting - Dr Bruce Lyons*

Dr Lyons advised the Meeting that the NSC 1998 has been successful in many respects with good support from the members and an excellent scientific program. Hosting a conference in Tasmania does present some problems due to the low membership base. The demographics of registrants is interesting in that there are roughly equal numbers from every state. One third of the 200 registrants are students who are subsidised and this does impact on financial outcomes. The NSC will make a modest profit.

Dr Wesselingh congratulated Dr Lyons and the LOC on their efforts.

Dr Judy Halliday moved that the Reports from Subcommittees be accepted; seconded by Dr Peter O'Loughlin.

#### **Item 7 - Election of Life Member - Board of Directors of ASMR propose Dr Peter Doherty for Life Membership**

Dr Wesselingh referred to the success of MRW in 1998 being in part due to Peter Doherty who accepted ASMR's invitation to participate in a demanding national lecture tour. He advised the Meeting that the Board of Directors propose Dr Doherty for Honorary Life Membership and asked for a show of hands by those in favour of the proposal.

The proposal to elect Dr Peter Doherty to Honorary Life

Membership of ASMR was carried unanimously.

**Item 8 - Venue for the NSC 1999**

Dr Levon Khachigian, Chair of the LOC 1999 announced the venue for the 1999 NSC would be Fairmont Resort, Leura, NSW and that the dates for the Meeting would be November 27-29, 1999.

**Item 9 - NSC 2000**

Dr Matt Gillespie announced that the NSC 2000 would be held in Melbourne and that Dr Andrew Sinclair has agreed to convene that Meeting.

**Item 10 - General Business**

Dr Wesselingh asked if any member present wished to raise matters for discussion. There being no matters raised, Dr Wesselingh handed the Meeting over to the new President of the Society, Dr Matt Gillespie.

**Item 11 - Office Bearers**

**1999**

Dr Gillespie referred to the amount of work completed and the number of issues dealt with by the Board during Dr Wesselingh's presidency as outstanding. Dr Wesselingh took over Kieran Scott's initiative for Medical Research Week and made it a huge success, raising the profile of H&MR and ASMR. He was at the helm to cope with a Federal Election, restructuring of NHMRC, GrantNet and the Wills Strategic Review. Dr Gillespie thanked and congratulated Dr Wesselingh for his tremendous contribution to the Society.

Dr Gillespie illustrated the structure of the 1999 Board of Directors and its interaction with the membership, state committees, event organisers, NHMRC, politicians and the public. Portfolio assignments are -

**President-elect**

Dr Rob Ramsay

**Honorary Treasurer**

Dr Peter O'Loughlin

**Honorary Secretary**

Dr Judy Halliday

**Event Liaison Officers**

Drs Ramsay/Clay

**Newsletter**

Dr Jason Smythe

**Careers**

Drs Lyons/Sinclair/Clay

**Membership**

Dr Carol Armour

**NSC 1999 overseeing**

Drs Schofield/Armour

**NSC 2000**

Dr Andrew Sinclair

**NSC Working Group**

**Chairs**

Drs Wesselingh/O'Loughlin

Drs Sinclair/Mamo

**EB**

Drs Clay/Smythe

**IP**

Drs Schofield/Gillespie

Dr Gillespie closed the Meeting at 5:15