

the Australian Society for Medical Research

ACN 000 599 235 ABN 18 000 599 235 145 Macquarie Street, Sydney NSW 2000

Annual Report, November 2001



President's Report Dr Peter O'Loughlin

The activities of the Board of Directors of the Society in the past 12 months have been largely dominated by the

expansion of ASMR Medical Research Week^(R) and preparations for the Federal Election campaign.

Political

Following the reports of the Innovation Summit Implementation Group (ISIG) and the Chief Scientist, Robin Batterham it was clear that innovation and education would have a strong influence on the political agenda in 2001. Members of the Board, and its Executive in particular, have maintained a dialogue with key ministers and shadow ministers throughout the year to ensure that these issues remain at the top of the political agenda.

By the time this report is distributed the outcome of the Federal election will be known. Regardless of the result, Australia will have a new Federal Minister for Health. The harmonious relationship that the Board has established with Michael Wooldridge has enabled us to discuss issues of concern readily. Establishing a good working relationship with the new minister will be a priority of the incoming Board of Directors.

Over the course of this year various members of the Executive have joined me in meetings with a number of key politicians. Some of the more important issues that have been raised in these meetings include:

- the need for rapid implementation of any new investments to encourage innovation.
- the need to encourage philanthropy.
- distribution of new project-related infrastructure should target the organisations which incur the research project costs.
- the need for an evidence-based approach to regular review of government spending on medical research. We suggest that the appropriate indicator should be the average per capita government

expenditure on medical research in OECD countries.

Throughout the year we have impressed upon both parties the importance of adherence to the recommendations of the HMRSR. In particular we have reminded politicians the review recognised that "Curiosity driven, investigator initiated, peerreviewed fundamental research is the foundation of our current success and it must remain so." Further, the review indicated that strategic research initiatives should "address local issues that are unique, significantly over-represented or more severe, and yet under-researched in Australia."

I'd like to thank all those members who, during the federal election campaign, responded to our call to write letters to members of Cabinet, the Shadow Cabinet and their local candidates. Members were asked to indicate in their communications how medical research funding affects them as individuals and the importance of medical research in general. A similar ASMR letter writing campaign in 1998 laid the ground work which allowed the Minister for Health to successfully call for the Health and Medical Research Strategic Review which resulted in the doubling of NHMRC funding.

ASMR Medical Research Week (R) 2001

The flagship event on the ASMR calendar, Medical Research Week is our major vehicle to raise the profile of Australia's medical research endeavour. Our role in this promotion has been recognised this year by a \$135,000 grant from the Department of Health and Aged Care to expand our outreach activities. Our medical research expos have been expanded into a truly national event thanks to the efforts of Moira Clay and Joe Simonetta.

The national lecture tour of the ASMR Medallist, Professor Alan Bernstein, President of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research attracted broad press coverage enhancing the profile of medical research and the Society. He addressed events attended by politicians, key figures from the corporate sector, journalists and medical researchers, speaking on "Revolution in Health Research: the 21st century

President's Report (continued)

venture". The events included dinners or luncheons in most capital cities, the televised National Press Club Luncheon in Canberra and the RICH Forum in Melbourne.

Australian Health and Medical Research Congress 2002

Preparations for this ASMR initiative are well and truly under way, with 25 Societies having been signed up as participants. The Congress will be a truly international standard meeting offering economies of scale that will enable the participating societies to attract a significant number of the world's best scientists to take part as plenary or keynote speakers. The successful recruitment of such an impressive number of affiliate Societies is the result of many hours of careful negotiation and hard work by Bronwyn Kingwell.

National Scientific Conference 2001

This year's NSC at the Marriott Hotel in the Gold Coast with the theme "BioInnovation: The Future of Medical Research" brings many excellent national and international speakers together to discuss emerging areas of medical research. The organising committee under Lyn Griffiths have put together an exciting program that will satisfy both professional and social interests of the delegates.

NHMRC

An article by Peter Pockley in the Australian of 30th May 2001 criticised NHMRC accrual accounting figures and suggested that they could not be trusted. The claims were answered by NHMRC in a document published in the July edition of the Newsletter.

Research Committee announced the introduction of a new scheme - the Career Development Awards. Available to researchers in all areas of health and medical research, this scheme aims to further develop Australian health and medical researchers early in their career. A part-time award will be available to allow the recipient to undertake research while continuing in a related health professional position.

ABC Science Unit

In late 2000 there was national concern that funding and structural changes in the ABC

would threaten the future of the Science Unit. The ASMR wrote to all federal politicians to support the need for a strong ABC Science Unit. Highlighting that the ABC plays an essential role in the communication and analysis of scientific, technological and health-related issues and events. These issues include some of the most important facing Australia in the 21st century. We recommended that:

- 1. The ABC maintains a leading role in the broadcast coverage of science, technology and health issues.
- 2. This role requires as a minimum a capacity for specialised news and investigative reporting and ideally a capacity for the production of feature-documentary programs for radio and television.
- To meet this goal the ABC should retain journalists, researchers and producers with specialised expertise in the analysis of scientific, technical and health issues.

The Board will communicate these recommendations to the incoming ABC Managing Director in due course.

Submissions

ASMR has made submissions by invitation to the following Reviews: Review of the NSW CC Act, Inquiry into matters arising from the Post Mortem and Anatomical Examination Practices of the Institute of Forensic Medicine, NSW, Child Health Research Institute, SA, Women's & Children's Hospital, SA.

I'd like to thank all members of the Board in 2001 for their remarkable efforts. It has been a very busy year, but we have been rewarded with significant progress on many fronts. The efficiency of our Executive Office, thanks to the untiring efforts of Cath West and Lexy Harris ensures that all member services continue to be provided without spiralling annual fees and that the Board is able to effectively represent its members. I am also grateful to the RACPfor generously providing our office accommodation. Finally, I wish Peter Schofield and the new Board all the best for the coming year.

Peter O'Loughlin November 2001

Directors and Office Bearers 2001

Dr Peter O'Loughlin, President
Professor Peter Schofield, President-elect
Dr Moira Clay, Honorary Treasurer
Associate Professor Andrew Sinclair, Honorary Secretary
Dr Rohan Baker
Dr Catherine Coulter
Associate Professor Lyn Griffiths
Dr Ricky Johnstone
Dr Bronwyn Kingwell
Dr Cassandra Lawson
Dr Giuseppe Simonetta
Executive Officer - Catherine West

Board Meetings 2001 Schedule of Attendance by Directors

November 25, 2000

Present: Dr Rob Ramsay (Chair), Dr Peter O'Loughlin, Dr Bruce Lyons, Dr Moira Clay, Dr Carol Armour, Dr Rohan Baker, Dr Catherine Coulter, A/Professor Lyn Griffiths, Dr Bronwyn Kingwell, Dr Cassandra Lawson, Dr G Simonetta, A/Profesor Andrew Sinclair

Apologies: Prof P Schofield, Dr Ricky Johnstone

March 22, 2001

Present: Dr Peter O'Loughlin (Chair), Professor Peter Schofield, Dr Moira Clay, Dr Rohan Baker, Dr Catherine Coulter, Dr Cassie Lawson, Dr Bronwyn Kingwell, A/Prof Lyn Griffiths, Dr G Simonetta.

Apologies: A/Prof Andrew Sinclair, Dr Ricky Johnstone

July 17, 2001

Present: Dr Peter O'Loughlin (Chair), Professor Peter Schofield, Dr Moira Clay, A/Prof Andrew Sinclair.

September 8, 2001

Present: Dr Peter O'Loughlin(Chair), Prof Peter Schofield, Dr Moira Clay, A/Prof Andrew Sinclair, Dr Rohan Baker, Dr Catherine Coulter, Dr Bronwyn Kingwell, A/Prof Lyn Griffiths, Dr Cassie Lawson, Dr G Simonetta.

Apologies: Dr Cassandra Lawson, Dr Ricky Johnstone (pt meeting)

Past Presidents

1961	BG Firkin
1962	AP Skyring
1963	RP Shearman
1964	GArcher
1965	J McRae
1966	AWT Edwards
1967	MR Playoust
1968	PJ Nestel
1969	PJ Nestel
1970	PA Castaldi
1971	JR Turtle
1972	WJO'Sullivan
1973	TJ Martin
1974	JK Healy
1975	JP Chalmers
1976	AA Morley
1977	NG Ardlie
1978	A Basten
1979	JW Funder
1980	GG Duggin
1981	RL Dawkins
1982	JK Findlay
1983	JA Eisman
1984	JA Whitworth
1985	BM Hall
1986	GC Farrell
1987	RL Sutherland
1988	JG McDougall
1989	NH Hunt
1990	JJ Finlay-Jones
1991	MJ Field
1992	PH Hart
1993	WD Tilley
1994	CL Clarke
1995	S Clark
1996	G Mann
1997	K Scott
1998	S Wesselingh
1999	MT Gillespie
2000	R Ramsay
2001	PDO'Loughlin

ASMR Annual General Meeting Tuesday 27th November, 2001

1:00pm - 2:00pm Marriott Resort Hotel, Surfers Paradise

AGENDA

Item 1.	Welcome and Apologies - Dr Peter O'Loughlin	
Item 2.	Confirmation of Minutes, AGM of 27th November 2000 - Dr P O'Loughlin	
Item 3.	President's Report - Dr Peter O'Loughlin	
Item 4.	Treasurer's Report - Dr Moira Clay	
Item 5.	ASMR Research Fund - Dr Moira Clay	
Item 6.	Subcommittee Reports	
	a) Research Careers - Dr Catherine Coulter	
	b) Membership - Dr Cassie Lawson	
	c) Newsletter - A/Professor Andrew Sinclair	
	d) ASMR Medical Research Week - Dr Moira Clay	
	e) State Report - Dr Peter O'Loughlin	
	f) National Scientific Conference 2001 - A/Prof Lyn Griffiths	
	g) National Scientific Conference 2002 - Dr Ricky Johnstone	
	h) Aust. Health and Medical Research Congress - Dr Bronwyn Kingwell	
Item 7.	General Business	
Item 8.	Directors and Office Bearers, 2002 - Prof Peter Schofield	
	A/Professor Andrew Sinclair - Honorary Secretary	

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH HELD AT THE SOFITEL HOTEL, MELBOURNE, VICTORIA ON MONDAY NOVEMBER 27, 2000, COMMENCING AT 12:15PM.

Item 1 - Welcome and Apologies

Dr Rob Ramsay opened the Annual General Meeting, of November 27, 2000 welcoming all present and announcing apologies from Dr Christine Clarke, Dr Kieran Scott and the Human Genetics Society of Australia.

Item 2 -Confirmation of Minutes, AGM of 28th November 1999

In the presence of the required quorum, Dr Moira Clay proposed the Minutes of the AGM of November 28th 1999 be accepted as a true and accurate reflection of that meeting; seconded by Associate Professor Andrew Sinclair.

Item 3 - President's Report

Dr Ramsay opened his remarks by saying that this is the time when Presidents reflect on the past year. He referred to the tabled report contained in the Annual Report and went on to speak of the strong support he had received from the Executive and Board of ASMR. Dr Ramsay thanked Cath West and Alexis Harris for their efforts in underpinning the activities

of the Society.

Dr Ramsay went on to say that, with the expectations of the HMR community increasing and membership of ASMR expanding through its affiliations to 113,500 Australians, the Society must be able to respond to government initiatives and actions as well communicate with the public.

Dr Ramsay thanked the current Minister for Health, Dr Michael Wooldridge for his support of health and medical research in general and ASMR in particular; the latter, despite many 'robust' conversations. ASMR, during the course of the year have many contacts with federal and state parliamentarians, pushing the HMR message. This is an important aspect of activity and the Society is an organisation which is well known and respected.

ASMR, Dr Ramsay said, is encouraging closer associations with public health and thanked Dr Carol Armour for her efforts in this regard. He noted also that there must be consideration for the needs and expectations of consumer interest groups.

Dr Ramsay thanked his family for their support and reminded the meeting that Directors of the Society do make a sacrifice of time on behalf of the HMR community. He thanked the previous President, Dr Matthew Gillespie for his work in 1999 and spoke of the good heart of ASMR and the pride all members should take in their Society.

Dr Ramsay wished the incoming President, Dr Peter O'Loughlin, every success for the coming year.

Item 4 - Treasurer's Report - Dr Bruce Lyons

Dr Bruce Lyons referred to the reports contained within the Annual Report and spoke of the consolidation of all state accounts to facilitate the new taxation reporting requirements.

The turnover of the Society is over \$500,000 per annum. Although there is a large turnover, the profit on operations is around \$12,000 this year. The financial stance of the Society, Dr Lyons said, is quite good at present.

Item 5 - Research Fund Report - Dr Bruce Lyons

Dr Lyons referred again to

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the reports contained within the Annual Report. The fund has been growing slowly by two to three thousand dollars per annum with ASMR offering the ASMR Research Fund Award of \$2000 each year for the past two years.

The Board has decided to increase this award to \$5000.

Dr Matthew Gillespie proposed that the Financial Reports of the Society be accepted by the Meeting; seconded by Professor Peter Schofield.

Item 6 -Sub-committee Reports

a) Research Careers - Dr Moira Clay

Dr Clay advised that ASMR has taken the position that it should be a conduit of information to members on questions raised in regard to enterprise bargaining and will continue in this way.

b) Membership - Dr Cassie Lawson

Dr Lawson spoke of the need to increase ordinary membership and advised the meeting that ASMR look to the support of existing members to assist in this regard. The Society has been very successful in the recent past in improving the numbers of organisations affiliated or associated, and it is through this mechanism that the Society claims representation of 113,500 Australians.

c) Newsletter - Dr Rob Ramsay

Dr Ramsay commented that it is always difficult to collect the materials required to produce the Newsletter. He thanked Dr Jason Smythe for his efforts early in the year and A/Prof Griffiths. He thanked also, Cath West for her contributions to the Newsletter.

d) ASMR Medical Research Week ^(R) -Dr Moira Clay

Dr Clay thanked the state committees for their work in making ASMR Medical Research Week successful and advised that 2001 would be bigger and better than ever.

e) State Reports - Dr Rob Ramsay

Dr Ramsay thanked again all of the committees for their sterling efforts over the past year and referred to the reports contained within the Annual Report (financial) as an indication of the extent of their contributions.

f) National Scientific Conference 2000 -Associate Professor Andrew Sinclair

Associate Professor Sinclair referred to the theme "From Bench to Bedside and Beyond" of the NSC, the good support from a number of sponsors and in particular the Medibank Private awards which attracted a large number of applications.

g) National Scientific Conference 2001 -Associate Professor Lyn Griffiths

A/Prof Griffiths advised that the NSC next year will be on the Gold Coast and that the LOC anticipate a good attendance. The committee is encouraging strong student participation.

The theme for the conference will be bioinnovation and how this fits in with medical research and it's future.

h) Health and Medical Research Congress 2002 - Dr Bronwyn Kingwell

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Dr Ramsay spoke of the move to this new activity for the Society in encouraging organisations to participate in a FASEB style of conference. He introduced Bronwyn Kingwell to the meeting and congratulated her on her achievements in moving the Congress forward.

Dr Kingwell advised that plans are progressing well and that the Congress will be held November 25/29 2002 at the Melbourne Conference and Exhibition Centre. At present there are four major participants (societies holding their AGM at the event) and 16 or more participating with workshops or symposia.

Conference management (appointed by open tender) will be ASN Pty Ltd. Legalities, Dr Kingwell said, have been agreed upon and contractual arrangements are at the stage of obtaining signatures.

Item 7 - General Business

Dr Ramsay passed the conduct of the meeting to Dr Peter O'Loughlin.

Item 8 -Directors and Office Bearers, 2001

Dr Peter O'Loughlin announced the board structure for 2000 -

Executive:

Prof Peter Schofield President-Elect/Research Australia

Dr Moira Clay, Honorary Treasurer and ASMR MRW Convenor

Associate Professor Andrew Sinclair, Honorary Secretary and Communications

Directors:

Dr Bronwyn Kingwell Australian Health and Medical Rsh. Congress

Dr Cassie Lawson Membership Convenor

Dr Rohan Baker Membership

A/Prof Griffiths NSC2001

Dr Cathie Coulter Research Careers Convenor

Dr G Simonetta ASMR MRW

Dr Ricky Johnstone (co-opted Director) NSC 2002 Dr O'Loughlin commented that all Directors had agreed upon the Executive unanimously. Prof Peter Schofield will continue his important role of liaison with Research Australia, a newly emerging body who need to understand ASMR's role. The Honorary Secretary, Professor Associate Andrew Sinclair will also oversee the Newsletter and Dr Moira Clay as Honorary Treasurer, will continue to convene ASMR Medical Research Week.

Dr O'Loughlin thanked the retiring directors and presented the ASMR badge to each of them with the following comments.

Dr Bruce Lyons, has been a board member since 1995, NSC Convenor in 1998 and Honorary Treasurer this year.

Dr Carol Armour, an NSC convenor prior to becoming a board member and Convenor of the Membership Committee at time when membership has been increased dramatically.

Dr Rob Ramsay took on the presidency with characteristic enthusiasm and vigour at a critical time in the political development of the Society. His efforts

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have given ASMR an unprecedented access to politicians. He has encouraged the affiliations which increase membership base and was instrumental in obtaining a large sponsorship amount which will allow ASMR an opportunity to ramp up it's activities. Rob. Dr O'Loughlin said, does like to meet problems head on but has the wisdom to know when to make a strategic retreat.

Dr O'Loughlin thanked Dr Ramsay for his work on behalf of the Society.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 1:05pm

Dr Rob Ramsay

Dr Peter O'Loughlin November 2001

Obituary

Professor Barry Firkin



Barry Firkin was the driving force with Jim McRae and Alan Skyring in establishing ASMR. He was the first President and the first financial member of the Society.

Appointed a life member of ASMR in 1983, Barry will long be remembered and missed by friends and colleagues.

The "Firkin Oration", presented by many eminent scientists over the years has become an integral part of our National Scientific Conference.

We owe a debt of gratitude to Barry Firkin; his ideals and aspirations for Australian Health and Medical Research driven by courage, imagination and initiative, founded the Society.

Barry lost his battle with leukaemia on Jan 12, 2001.

The Australian Society for Medical Research

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