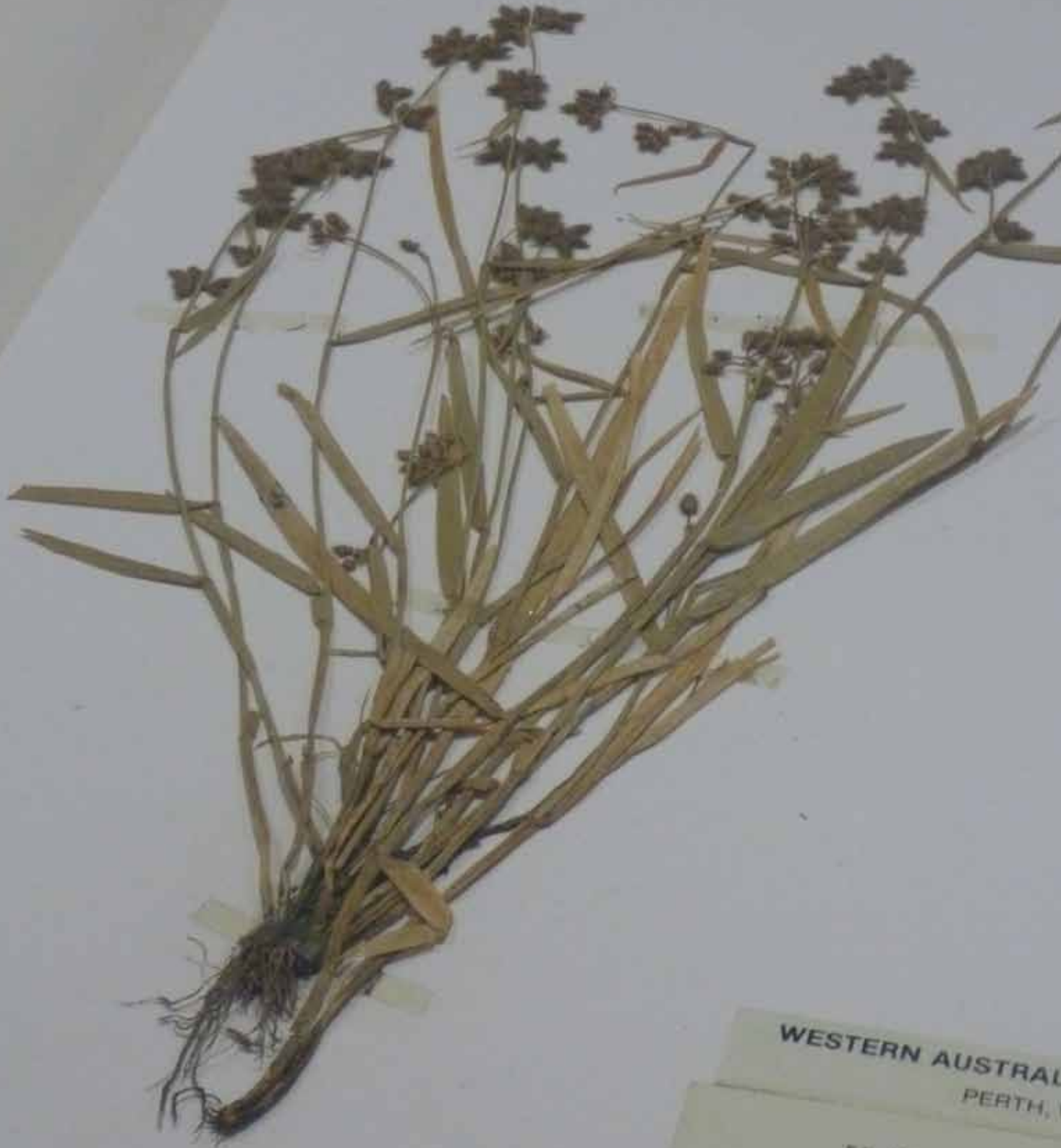


AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE COMMUNICATORS

2013





*Australian Science Communicators:
the peak professional body for
those communicating science in the
Great South Land.*

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Presidents' report

Rod Lamberts and Claire Harris

It has been a busy and exciting year with lots of events at branch-level and with the Big Science Communication Summit and of course leading into our national conference in Brisbane in February 2014.

2013 was a unique year for Presidential matters. Rod Lamberts was elected at the AGM in November 2012, however ended his functional tenure in May with a major health incident.

Vice-President Claire Harris stepped in as acting national President after Rod stepped down officially in early July when it became clear he would be unable to return to the role.

Highlights of 2013:

1. Recruitment: it was a busy year for recruitment processes with the General Manager position advertised (unfortunately unfilled) but the Webmaster, Scope Editor and writer positions filled. This has resulted in a better functioning and profiled ASC.

We've built relationships with Inspiring Australia, universities and other partners to deliver projects across Australia.

2. Exploring professionalisation: ASC began a process, led by Rod Lamberts and Vice President Will Grant, to explore what members want from an organisation like ASC.
3. Strengthened relationships with the Inspiring Australia team at the (now) Department of Industry through a range of funded projects, communication activities and the recently-formed Science Sector Group.
4. Increasing profile for ASC, including through our website and key projects like the National Audit completed in 2012, which continues to gain profile.
5. Collaborations with other organisations both at the local level (led by our branches) and the national level, for example the Big Science Communication Summit.





There are key operational matters that the Executive has dealt with – many behind the scenes – that are essential to the future operation of ASC.

These have included:

- ensuring tax compliance and investigating our not-for-profit status
- bringing insurance arrangements up to date to cover our structure and operations
- developing new communication and information sharing tools for the Executive and National Council maintaining a stable financial position.

The Executive and key volunteers have undertaken major external communication activities, including:

- raising the profile of Australian Science Communicators (eg. through web and social media)
- consulting members and non-members on the ‘professionalisation’ of ASC
- further developing the platforms for our online community
- maintaining relationships with Inspiring Australia, universities and other associated partners and delivered sci comm projects
- working towards the national conference, ASC2014

We also managed quite a bit of change within the Executive team and juggled illness and various commitments.

While we had members with extra (and unprecedented) workloads, our meetings (every 1 or 2 months) were positive and productive.

A particular highlight was the opportunity to meet face-to-face after the Big Science Communication Summit in Sydney in June. We are sure that the ASC has a great opportunity to build on the growing profile of science communication and science in society and to represent its members.

We are very happy to be passing the baton on to Joan Leach: our new President for 2014.

As a community, we need to be ever mindful of what the ASC does and can provide to our members and to wider society who are grappling with how science, technology and innovation should be discussed and debated.

Here’s to a bigger and better 2014,

Rod Lamberts and Claire Harris
2013 Presidents of the Australian Science Communicators

ASC National Executive 2013:

Rod Lamberts (President), Claire Harris (Vice President/President), Jesse Shore (Past President), Will Grant (Vice President), Sarah Lau (Secretary), Pete Wheeler (Treasurer), Kali Madden (Executive Officer, non-voting).



National program reports

The ASC supports science communication in all its forms - from the BIG Science Communication Summit to our Unsung Heros. We've also ensured a voice for the ASC at a national level, with a spot on Inspiring Australia's 'Science Sector Group'

BIG Science Communication Summit

The BIG Science Communication Summit promised to be a BIG event...and it was.

We fell in love with the critically endangered Baw Baw frog, went wild with some (suitable for work) selfies, visualised rips with purple dye at Bondi and saw Derek Muller (creator of Veritasium) berate himself on film for his own alleged pretentiousness.

We were disappointed that Craig Reucassel didn't chair his session in Nicole Kidman-esque shorts, but you can't win them all.

But while our speakers used some incredible case studies to show us that we are having some real successes with science communication in Australia, our group discussions and workshops told us that we are not quite there - yet.

The collaborative format of the workshops let everyone raise concerns and voice their ideas on where we should be heading.

We fell in love with the endangered Baw Baw frog, and visualised Bondi rips in purple dye.

And we realised that many of the issues we face are the same:

- a need for defined leadership, aims and goals in science communication
- a lack of ways to evaluate and measure projects
- a fear or mistrust of communication, communicators and the technology involved

We raised a lot of questions, but we also came up with answers - and voted on them.

See what we came up with at: <http://vote.sciencerewired.com/>

After two full days of science communication brainstorming, the summit culminated in a promise. A promise to do more, and in a group therapy moment, we all made a commitment to doing our part in improving the engagement of science in Australia.

Read more about the summit, including blog posts about some of the sessions, at: <http://sciencerewired.org/summit>

Inspiring Australia

Working with the national strategy for engagement with the sciences.

The Australian Science Communicators continues to be an active partner in the Inspiring Australia strategy.

We are a member of the Science Sector Group, which provides national leadership and coherent action among non-government science sector organisations.

This group aims to enable collaboration, information sharing and, where appropriate, coordinated approaches to issues around science.

An important objective is to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, quantity and quality of Australian public science engagement.

Australia aspires to be an inventive society with a technologically skilled workforce, a scientifically literate community and scientifically well informed decision makers.

The Inspiring Australia strategy aims to build a strong, open relationship between science and society, underpinned by effective communication of science and its uses.

The ASC shares many of the underlying aims of Inspiring Australia. We view that our involvement in several of Inspiring Australia's activities will add value to the efforts of both groups.

Another thread of our alliance with Inspiring Australia has allowed us to upgrade our website, with funding to manage the project, and to pay our writers.

We also hope to continue to encourage discussion about the strategy, to raise awareness of its aim and boost engagement with the strategy.

Scope

The ASC's national newsletter.

In the past year Scope has seen a number of improvements – many of which were implemented by (and should be attributed to the hard work of) former Scope editor Sally Miles.

We've improved the look and feel of the newsletter, and the introduction of a Scope writing team has allowed us to

Science communication can come from many sources: scientists, teachers, journalists, writers, entertainers, students, and other communicators and, most noticeably, radio and TV personalities.

One of the members of the judging panel from last year's award is former ASC President and Eureka Awards Science Book Prize winner, David Ellyard, who said he recognises the importance of communicating science out to the public, but that science communication isn't just about the top-level celebrities.

"Science communication goes on at many levels, from high profile journalism,

"Science communication goes on at many levels: from high profile journalism, conferences, and documentaries to informal chats."

continue to provide new and varying content for members.

The ASC volunteer communications team work hard on the newsletter and aim to produce a quality publication that encompasses the ASC's vision for its newsletter.

Although we do receive some very positive feedback, we also invite any negative feedback or suggestions, and there is, as always, an open call for content.

For those who have contributed content in 2013 – particularly our volunteer writers – a sincere thank you.

conferences, and TV documentaries to informal person-to-person chats," said David.

"The high-fliers get a lot of kudos, but those who work productively in other dimensions are also worthy of acknowledgment."

The Unsung Hero of Australian Science Communication 2013 award will be presented by Robyn Williams at the Australian Science Communicators National Conference, held from 2-5 February 2014 at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Thanks to Victoria Leitch, editor of Scope, for these national reports, which first appeared in the newsletter.

Unsung Hero

Celebrating excellence in science communication.

The Unsung Hero of Science Communication award is offered annually by the ASC. It recognises and celebrates excellence in science communication across Australia. The ASC created this award to honour:

- a person or group who exemplify science communication
- who have not yet received significant recognition for their contribution to science and its promotion
- for work done in Australia over a considerable or prolonged time.

Unsung Hero

The Unsung Hero of Australian Science Communication 2013 award will be presented by Robyn Williams at the Australian Science Communicators National Conference, held from 2-5 February 2014 at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre.



State branch reports

From air crashes to ‘quizilicious’ trivia, the state branches of the ASC hosted dozens of events for members and the public across Australia in 2013. The ASC is a broad church, and that’s reflected in the range of events hosted or supported by the state branches.

In 2013, our branches held public lectures, journal clubs, careers sessions and professional development workshops. But it’s not all work – we’ve also seen a stargazing night, an after-dark museum tour, the science of beer, and plenty of science trivia.

ASC events are a chance to get to know what our colleagues are doing.

The WA branch went on an after dark tour of the WA Museum, hosted by Trish McDonald, who’s leading the development of the New Museum project.

Others are about bringing members together to share advice and expertise.

In Victoria, ASC members, National Science Week event holders and ‘Unlocking Australia’s Potential’ Inspiring Australia grant holders mulled over the ups and downs of science communication over a drink.

Careers are another focus, with professional workshops on writing, podcasting and online education, and in South Australia, a journal club to share current research in science and communication.

The ACT branch is reaching out to students through the

ANU SciComm Society: together they hosted a night for students to ask the pros for advice on work experience and the job hunt.

And, from time to time, the branches partner with other organisations to support large public events.

***...a stargazing night,
an after-dark museum tour,
the science of beer, and
plenty of science trivia....***

The Victorians supported a packed-out lecture at the Wheeler Centre with ‘giants of medicine’ Prof Peter Doherty and Prof Ian Frazer, and the ACT branch joined with Questacon to host a National Science Week event on Canberra’s deadliest plane crash.

If you’ve got an idea for an ASC branch event in your state, feel free to contact your branch president – our organisation lives and dies by its volunteers.

Australian Capital Territory

President: Ian McDonald

Mayday! Re-examining Canberra's deadliest plane crash

National Science Week event in the Japan Theatre at Questacon, 14/08/13

With the 73rd memorial of the Canberra Air Disaster fresh in the minds of those who attended the crash site at Fairbairn Pine Plantation (near the Canberra Airport) just a day before, the ASC-ACT branch brought in the experts to delve into the mystery surrounding this historic episode – with a bit of a science twist.

The sell-out National Science Week event was held in the Japan Theatre at Questacon on August 14 and gathered a diverse crowd of local eye witnesses, aeronautical enthusiasts, relatives of the deceased and detectives at heart – and thrilled them all with never-before-seen in public footage of the wreckage, a lesson in state-of-the-art forensic techniques by Mardi Southwell (AFP Forensic Science Team) and an in depth interview with Mr Andrew Tink, local expert and author of 'Air Disaster Canberra: the plane crash that destroyed a government'.

The ASC ACT Branch would like to thank those who helped make the event a major success: ACT Branch of the Australian New Zealand Forensic Society, Questacon, Inspiring Australia, ACT National Science Week committee and the ACT Government.

Read more at <http://www.asc.asn.au/blog/2013/08/31/event-review-canberras-deadliest-air-disaster-re-examined/>

Careers In Research: is Australia producing too many PhDs?

Panel discussion at the CSIRO Discovery Centre, 18/03/13

Hosted in conjunction with Inspiring Australia, an audience of over 100 attended this recorded-for-radio discussion which posed the question 'Is Australia producing too many PhDs?'

This panel discussion came about after the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education commissioned the Australian Council of Learned Academies to investigate the career pathway for researchers in Australia.

Moderator and ABC Radio National Big Ideas host Paul Barclay told the audience that Australia is currently producing over 7000 PhD graduates annually, nearly twice as many as only a decade ago. This led towards discussions about the sustainability of the system and where all these graduates go once they graduate, particularly those with a specialised area of expertise.

Read more at <http://www.asc.asn.au/blog/2013/05/01/too-many-phds/>

Mentoring & networking evening

Networking evening in the Green Couch Room, CPAS, ANU, 09/05/13

This year the ACT Branch started a strong relationship with the ANU SciComm Society, working together to help each other create some great science-based events.

To start this all off we ran a combined networking evening, where students studying science communication could meet with ACT based ASC members and ask for advice about work experience, job hunting and what to expect in the future.

The event also included some short talks (3-5 mins) from 6 current science communicators in different fields: Will Grant (CPAS, ANU), Kylie Walker (Academy of Science), Cris Kennedy (CSIRO Discovery), Toss Gascoigne (Science Communication Consultant), Simon France (Inspiring Australia).

Other events in the Australian Capital Territory

- The Science of Beer: guided tour with Lochie from the Wig n Pen, 27/2/2013
- Pi and Pint Night, The Duxton, 21/7/2013
- Producing great podcasts: workshop run by Daniel Oysten from Content Grasshopper at CSIRO Corporate Centre, 31/10/2013

Read more about the ACT branch at <http://www.asc.asn.au/state-and-national/act/>

Follow the ACT branch on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ASC.Canberra>

New South Wales

President: Helen Sim

Cheer squad, critic or crusader? Science and medical writers today

Panel discussion at Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, 17/5/13

Cheer squad or critic? Awareness raiser, crusader or watchdog? What is the role of science and medical writers today?

We held a discussion on this and more, with a panel of expert science and medical writers in Sydney on 17 May. This was a joint event of the Australian Science Communicators and the Australasian Medical Writers' Association.

Our speakers were:

- Jane McCredie — executive director of the NSW Writers' Centre
- Mikey Slezak — Australasian correspondent for New Scientist
- Bianca Nogrady — freelance journalist, author and broadcaster.

Read more at <http://www.asc.asn.au/blog/2013/04/25/cheer-squad-critic-or-crusader-science-and-medical-writers-today/>

Trivia at the Toxteth and a touch of the AGMs

Trivia night, Toxteth Hotel, 28/6/13

Banish the blues of a Sydney winter! ASC-types came together in the warmth of the Fireplace room at Glebe's Toxteth Hotel for a night of science trivia and, of course, their choice of tipple.

For members we also had a quick and painless annual general meeting of the NSW branch, and a chance to have a say about what we want from the organisation.

Read more at <http://www.asc.asn.au/blog/2013/06/27/trivia-at-the-toxteth-and-a-touch-of-the-agms/>

Science spoken word and poetry night

Poetry night, Harold Park Hotel, 18/7/2013

The Australian Science Communicators, in association with WordinHand and Blue Space presented an evening of science-focused spoken word featuring two GIANTS of the spoken word genre.

It was an all science-focused evening with thoughts and insights on all things science: physics, biology, social-, pseudo- and hokum!

Read more at <http://www.asc.asn.au/blog/2013/07/06/nsw-science-spoken-word-poetry-night/>

About the New South Wales branch

Read more about the NSW branch at <http://www.asc.asn.au/state-and-national/nsw/>

South Australia

President: Rona Sakko

Alternative Medicine versus Science: Winners and Losers

Forum at RiAus, 11/12/12

This event examined pseudoscience, particularly in the context of medicine. The distinguished panel comprised scientists and science communicators: Prof Rob Morrison (science communicator), Dr Ian Musgrave (molecular pharmacologist/toxicologist), Tory Shepherd (journalist), Prof Marcello Costa (professor of neurophysiology) and Prof Alastair MacLennan (professor of obstetrics and gynaecology).

This was an evening of discussion and lively debate. All presenters had published/blogged on pseudoscience and had a healthy disrespect for those who would tout snake oil! The evening could have gone on far longer as the speakers created so much interest and generated a large number of questions. Feedback was that the evening was topical and informative, and all presenters were outstanding.

Have a Thing for Science Trivia?

Quiz Evening at RiAus, 11/2/13

This was the opportunity for science communicators and their friends to test their science knowledge against some of the biggest science nerds in Adelaide!

Quiz master Heather Bray had prepared the questions which challenged even the brightest. The evening was fun, entertaining and educational. A great night was had by all!

This event was also an excellent networking opportunity. Feedback from SA members is that networking is one of the main reasons they joined the ASC.

Science Engagement in Australia: results of the national audit

Forum at the University of Adelaide, 22/5/13

Two of the report authors of the National Audit of Science Engagement, Jenni Metcalf and Kristin Alford, joined in a panel discussion moderated by Toss Gascoigne. The speakers covered the implications of the audit findings for the practice of science communication.

The venue only allowed for a limited audience but those who attended reported that they had gained an important insight into the report and its findings. The topic was also relevant to them and their work in science communication, and the event gave them a valuable opportunity to ask questions and discuss science engagement.

Other events in South Australia

- Speed networking and branch AGM, 20/11/12
- Alternative medicine versus science: winners and losers, 11/12/12
- Have a thing for science trivia?, 11/2/13
- ASC-SA journal club, 9/4/13
- Stargazing night at the Heights Observatory, 20/4/13
- Science engagement in Australia: results of the national audit, 22/5/13
- Tour of Bureau of Meteorology, 19/6/13
- In celebration of pi!, 22/7/13
- Unsung Hero of SA science and science communication awards, 9/8/13

Read more about the SA branch at <http://www.asc.asn.au/state-and-national/south-australia/>

Follow the SA branch on Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/ausscicomsa>

Queensland

President: Tom Dixon

Meet the experts

Panel discussion and AGM at the Queensland Performing Arts Centre, 30/01/2013

A great evening, held in conjunction with the AGM, with prominent science communication experts Jenni Metcalfe (Director, Econnect Communication), Liz Minchin (Qld Editor, The Conversation), Ben Creagh (Communication manager, CSIRO Environment Group), Claire Cameron (Science Communication Manager, Queensland Institute of Medical Research). More than 40 attendees enjoyed the evening, and feedback from all was incredibly positive.

Working bee: Queensland contribution to ASC professionalization process

Series of branch meetings online and at Econnect Communication, April 2013

A series of gatherings, culminating in a meeting on the Econnect deck with 12 members coming together and nutting out a submission to ASC National Office on Queensland ASC's ideas for professionalising the ASC. Debate was lively, with ideas from all sectors of the science communication community (private firms, freelance science writers, academics, students etc).

Trivia: ASC-SEQ and Science Teachers' Association of Queensland

Trivia night at Green Beacon Bar, Tenerife

The National Science Week Science Trivia Night, held in conjunction with the Science Teachers' Association of Queensland was a fundraising and social event. It helped to develop close connections with STAQ and other ASC members, and raised \$300 for the South-East Queensland branch of the ASC.

Other activities in Queensland

- ASC SEQ has had 10 meetings throughout the year outside of the above events, mainly for event planning and social purposes.
- Our last few gatherings have been discussions focussed on planning for the 2014 ASC National Science Communication Conference, to be held in Brisbane.
- The ASC-SEQ regular newsletters now reach 148 subscribers, up from 123 in 2012.

Read more about the Queensland branch at <http://www.asc.asn.au/state-and-national/queensland/>

Follow the Queensland branch on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Australian-Science-Communicators-ASC-SE-Queensland/208947352463173>

Victoria

President: Carly Siebentritt

Giants of Medicine - health literacy: public health & evidence-based medicine

Public lecture at The Wheeler Centre, 7/8/2013

We frequently hear about general literacy levels in the community, and even about science and maths literacy, but rarely about the wider public understanding of evidence-based health matters. The exception to this has been the vaccination vs anti-vaccination argument playing itself out in online threads all over the internet; in newspapers and current affairs programs; and even in celebrity gossip columns with the likes of Jim Carey and Bill Maher making their ideas heard.

At Giants of Medicine we heard about these matters and more from two of the world's most important contributors to medical science, Nobel Laureate Professor Peter Doherty and Eureka Prize Winner Professor Ian Frazer, moderated by Reema Rattan, Health Editor for The Conversation.

Read more at <http://www.scienceweek.net.au/entertained-and-enlightened-by-the-giants-of-medicine-2/>

Professionalisation and advocacy: raising the bar for ASC?

Forum and AGM at Embiggen Books, 4/6/2013

There have been skilful and influential science communicators making a name for themselves individually for many years, but lately the greater profession is on people's radar. Science communication in its own right is finally entrenching itself in the psyche of policy makers and the broader public.

It seems we are in a time of expanding opportunities. But new opportunities mean we need to reflect on what science communication has been, what it is, and what it can be.

We science communicators have been calling for people to listen to us more for a long time. It looks like we are starting to get what we asked for. The question now is, what do we do with it?

Read more at <http://www.asc.asn.au/state-and-national/victoria/agm2013/>

Network nite: meet Victoria's science communicators

Networking session at Graduate House, University of Melbourne, 12/2/2013

Hosting a science communication event this year or need some inspiration for your future event? Want to find out more about science events in Victoria?

ASC members, National Science Week event holders and 'Unlocking Australia's Potential' Inspiring Australia grant holders came together for this networking evening. We discussed the ups and downs of science communication, developed chances to collaborate and worked to troubleshoot each other's events.

Read more at <http://www.asc.asn.au/state-and-national/victoria/agm2013/>

Other events in Victoria

- Communicating (and understanding) future technologies in medicine: panel discussion with Megan Munsie, Martin Delatycki and Melanie Thomson, moderated by Shane Huntington, 30/11/2013
- Future Friday: a sneak preview of the Science, Technology and the Future Conference: networking event, 29/11/2013
- MOOCs in the pub: panel discussion with Dr Marnie Blewitt and Dr Kylie Greig, from WEHI, moderated by Dyani Lewis, 16/10/2013

Read more about the Victorian branch at <http://www.asc.asn.au/state-and-national/victoria/>

Western Australia

President: Teresa Belcher

Museum and Mummies Night

Talk, tour and networking at the WA Museum, Perth, 27 May 2013

The ASC-WA was given the opportunity to visit the WA Museum after hours to hear from 'New Museum' Director Trish McDonald and visit the new Egyptian exhibition. After drinks and nibbles in the Museum foyer, Trish spoke in the Tunnel about the plans and vision for the new Museum construction.

This informal talk was followed by a private viewing of the exhibition from the British Museum – 'Secrets of the Afterlife: Magic, Mummies & Immortality in Ancient Egypt'. Over 100 artefacts were on display from the renowned British Museum collection, exclusively curated for the WA Museum. The oldest artefact on display was a 4,500 year old model of a set of tools used in 'Opening the Mouth' ceremonies during the funerary process. Two mummies were also part of the collection.

Read more at <http://www.asc.asn.au/state-and-national/western-australia/wa-events/asc-wa-event-review-mummies-and-museum-night/>

Quizalicious

Quiz night at Rosie O'Grady's pub, Northbridge, 19/06/13

With their eyes on the display of cool prizes, including science-themed mugs and ice cube trays, nine teams battled through eight rounds of science, music, geography and gossip – but there could only be one winner: team Trolololololo. By coincidence, this team was home to ASC WA branch president Teresa Belcher and committee member Sarah Lau, but we swear that they had not seen the questions before!

A healthy competitive vibe, fun questions, and intermittent mad dashes to score a scratchie made for a very entertaining night and happy participants.

Read more at <http://www.asc.asn.au/state-and-national/western-australia/wa-events/79771-2/>

Networking: tips from the experts

Presentation and social event, Rosie O'Grady's pub, Northbridge, 11/09/13

To help members improve their networking skills, the ASC WA Branch enlisted the help of ace networkers, the Chief Scientist of Western Australia, Professor Lyn Beazley, and Director of Science Partnerships at Scitech, Dr Simon Carroll.

Approximately 30 attendees, including 9 non-ASC members, came along to enjoy a drink and nibbles and gain some useful tips about how to expand their networks and build good professional relationships.

Read more at <http://www.asc.asn.au/state-and-national/western-australia/wa-events/asc-wa-event-review-networking-tips-from-the-experts/>

Other events in Western Australia

- Behind the scenes at the WA Herbarium: 21 October 2013
- SciComm panel discussion on freelance writing and editing: UWA, 20 September 2013
- Evaluation Workshop: SciTech, 22 July 2013
- Dinner and "Vision for the future of ASC" discussion: Queens Hotel, 10 July 2013
- Social drinks at Steve's, 12 April 2013
- Drinks and WA-Branch AGM and lecture with Joan Leach: UWA, 12 March 2013
- Evaluation Tool Roundtable: Scitech, February 2013

Read more about the WA branch at <http://www.asc.asn.au/state-and-national/western-australia/>

Follow the WA branch on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/AuSciCommWA>

*Prepared by: Claire Harris, Tamzin Byrne, Jesse
Shore*

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*Inside cover and page 7: Teresa Belcher Page 4
and 5: Claire Harris*

The Australian Science Communicators supports and represents those who make science accessible.

The ASC is a diverse national association, with around 500 members including journalists, writers, entertainers, scientists, students and other communicators who engage Australians (and people overseas) with science, technology and innovation.

 **20**
years of the ASC

 **500+**
members across Australia

 **50+**
local events in 2013

Contact the ASC

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