



ausSMC

australian science media centre

ANNUAL REVIEW JULY 2011 - JUNE 2012

Positive Hendra test on dog brings call for more research

High blood pressure in early pregnancy linked to birth defects

Study finds risk of heart damage up 41%, but blames hypertension not drug

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The Geelong laboratory is already renowned in the science world as a result of Dr Linfa Wang's breakthrough in finding a link between bats and the SARS virus. Bats will form a major part of experiments at the lab, which also has 120 monkeys used for HIV research.
The laboratory was mentioned in the Hollywood blockbuster Contagion. In the film, scientists receive a sample from Geelong that helps them fight a flu-like epidemic that came from a bat infecting a pig.
Prof Leggo said vigilance against diseases was necessary - another SARS-like virus could be around the corner.
"We do have these new and emerging viruses. And we don't know where they are going to come from," he said.
"If you have had the pleasure of seeing the film Contagion... that's what we're dealing with here. That is the likely scenario."
"It's not so much these four (hendra, ebola, SARS and nipah); it's probably one we don't know about."
The new laboratory was funded by the federal Government's National Collaborative Research Infrastructure

"Most of the satellite will burn up on re-entry, with perhaps as many as 20 stronger or harder small pieces surviving to reach the surface," editor Jonathan Nally said in a statement.

"But with the majority of the Earth comprising oceans or uninhabited (or very sparsely populated) remote regions, the chances are overwhelming that any pieces of UARS that survive re-entry will fall harmlessly and never be seen again."

Elephants crash the eco-debate

Heart patients, elderly warned about painkillers

Dr Bryce Vissel, Head of Research into Neural plasticity and Regeneration at the Garvan Institute of medical research said the study "offers enormous hope for recovery for people suffering from genetic disorders."

Mosquito trial wipes out dengue fever

Russian Mars probe to crash soon, with world watching

STUDY FAULTS RESEARCH LINKING HORMONE THERAPY TO CANCER

'Small chance' satellite may hit

Australia
Matthew Sadler
September 23, 2011

UVA a risk factor

Plays bigger role in skin cancer than suspected

A VICTORIAN reproduction expert supports a push by Australian scientists to trial using the DNA of three parents to prevent babies inheriting life-threatening diseases.

The technique could stop women passing mitochondrial diseases, which can cause conditions including heart failure, deafness and blindness, to their children.



Test subject takes first steps up stairs after neurorehabilitation with a combination of robotic harness and electrical-chemical stimulation. Photo source: EPFL, Switzerland.

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Australian Science Media Centre
Annual Review 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2012

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Cover images -
The mosquito *Aedes aegypti*, photo courtesy US Centres for Disease control and Prevention.
Coal seam gas field. Photo courtesy Santos.
South Pacific island - © Luizrocha | Dreamstime.com
CSIRO's new ASKAP antennas at the Murchison Radio-astronomy Observatory in WA. Photo courtesy WA Department of Commerce.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

As we wrap up another remarkable year in science and media, we are struck by the growing importance of evidence in media reporting of contentious issues. Whether it be wind turbines and health, coal seam gas, climate change or the Murray Darling Basin, without access to accurate, unbiased information it is very difficult for society to engage in constructive debate and make informed decisions.

Getting your head around...

With this issue firmly in mind, we created a new series of briefings in September 2011 called 'Getting your head around...'. Designed to help journalists understand and report on controversial topics, the series focuses on the evidence behind current issues, going back to basics when needed. The first on climate modelling was followed by a three-part series on coal seam gas, complete with a detailed graphic depicting the fracking process and a backgrounder to help journalists understand the science. We see this as a resource that journalists can keep coming back to whenever they need background or data.

Following on from this early series, we now have funding from Inspiring Australia, an initiative of the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education, to run "Getting your head around..." briefings for another two years. This project is part of a grant from Inspiring Australia to create an Australian news portal - The Science Media Exchange. Awarded in June 2012, this substantial grant will enable us to provide a much needed resource for the Australian and overseas media. The site will be a one-stop-shop for journalists looking for science news, video and images from Australia and New Zealand as well as a virtual meeting place for scientists and journalists.

New collaborations

This year we also launched the Science Media Collaboration, an exciting new venture which has enabled the AusSMC to engage more proactively with scientific institutions around the country, involving them more intimately in the activities of the Centre. At the end of June 2012, 13 universities and other research organisations were affiliated with the Centre through this new program and given the increasing number of activities, information and advice being channelled through the collaboration, we have no doubt that it will expand in 2012-13.

These extra services are provided on top of what we already offer - from the popular twice weekly Heads-up service to national news briefings, rapid reaction comments on breaking news and analysis of published research. We hope you'll find enough in these pages to enthuse you about the work of the Centre and your own role in this important function.

Special thanks

Finally, a personal note of thanks to Mike Rann who stepped down as premier of SA in 2011, and in the process stepped down from the AusSMC Board, making way for new premier and AusSMC Board member, Jay Weatherill. We thank Mike Rann for his inexhaustible enthusiasm and support for the Centre from its very beginning. We are also very excited to have Jay Weatherill as a member of the Board and look forward to a long and productive relationship.

Dr Susannah Elliott
CEO

Peter Yates AM
Chairman



Cameras at a groundwater media briefing in Sydney

Whether it be wind turbines and health, coal seam gas, climate change or the Murray Darling Basin, without access to accurate, unbiased information it is very difficult for society to engage in constructive debate and make informed decisions.

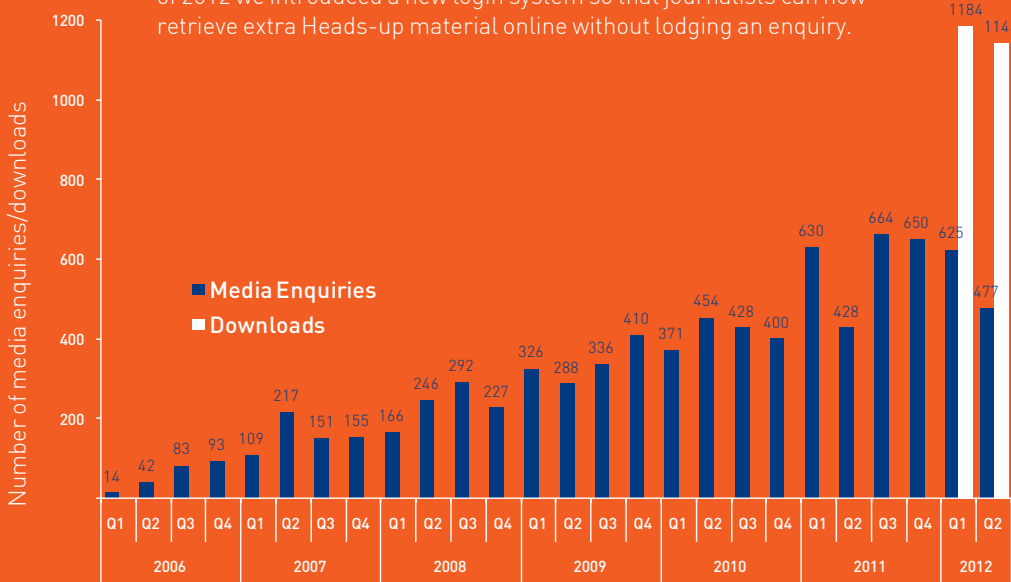


SA Premier and AusSMC board member the Hon Jay Weatherill speaking at an AusSMC function.

SNAPSHOT

AusSMC media enquiries received per quarter

GRAPH 1: Number of media enquiries received per quarter. At the start of 2012 we introduced a new login system so that journalists can now retrieve extra Heads-up material online without lodging an enquiry.



1,275

new science stories floated to the media via Heads-up

2,416

enquires received from the media

28%

increase on the previous year

3,050

Australian experts on AusSMC database

Over 200

scientists joined during 2011-12

1018

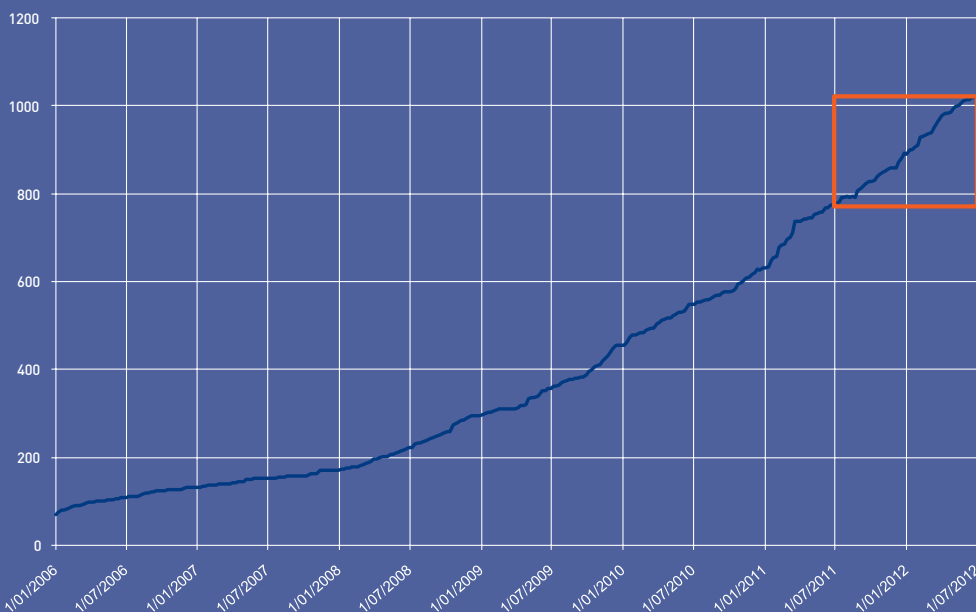
journalists registered with the AusSMC

327

new registrations received during 2011-12

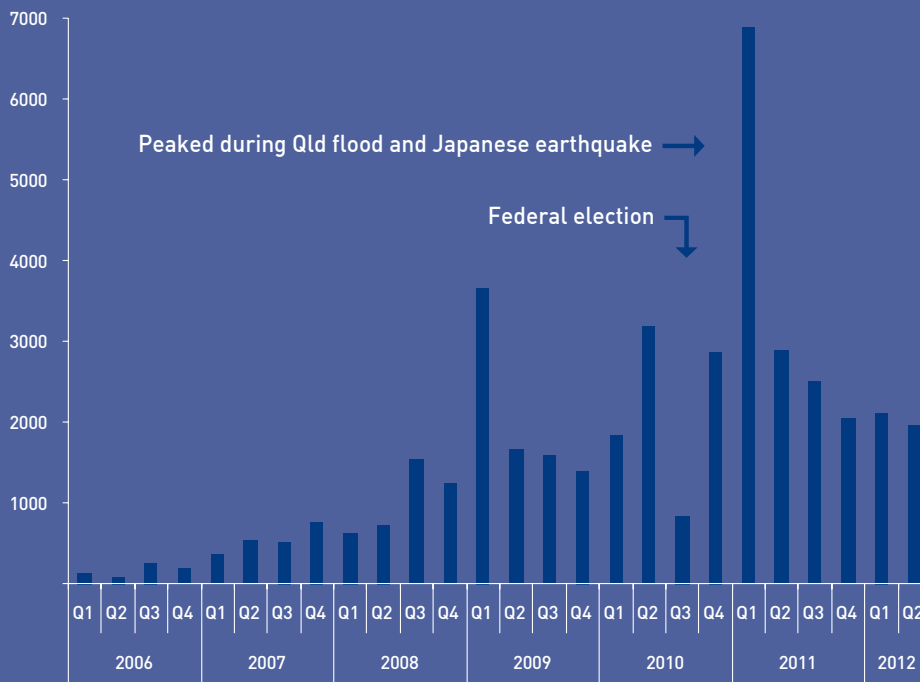
Number of active journalists currently registered (not cumulative)

GRAPH 2: Number of active journalists registered



Number of media clips per quarter using AusSMC-sourced content

GRAPH 3: Number of media clips per quarter using AusSMC-sourced content (briefings and rapid reactions only)



8,547

media clips were tracked as being directly associated with output from the AusSMC

33%

being overseas coverage (excludes Heads-up)

98

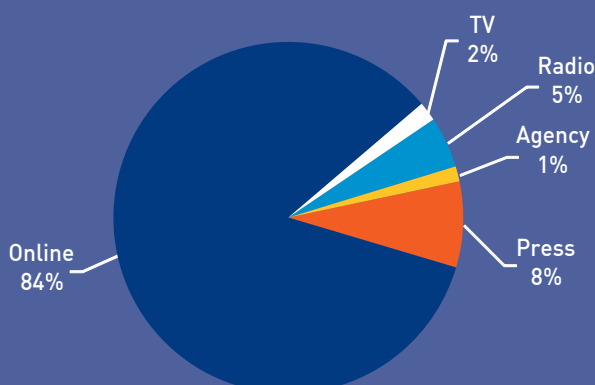
Rapid Reactions and Round-ups of expert comments were compiled and distributed

27

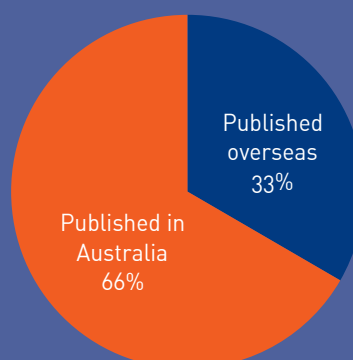
national media briefings were organised

Media coverage from AusSMC activities

By media type



By location



8,547 items

152

journalists tuned into at least one of our online briefings during the year

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

Media

With dramatic changes taking place in the media landscape, the AusSMC is constantly adapting to the evolving needs of journalists.

In July, we expanded our popular 'Heads-up' email bulletin for journalists from once a week to twice a week. Journalists welcomed the increase in content which meant more stories could be pitched to suit more deadlines across the weekly news cycle.

Complementing the extra Heads-up service, the Centre introduced an online log-in system to make it easier for journalists to obtain copies of embargoed research papers and other material on current and upcoming stories at any time of the day or night.

The Centre also presented a new category of media briefings called 'Getting your head around...'. These background briefings help journalists understand the fundamental science behind complex issues such as climate modelling, sea level rise and coal seam gas.

Science-Media Collaboration

The Centre introduced its Science-Media Collaboration this year. This initiative involves fostering better relationships with Australian universities and research organisations. In the 2012 pilot year, 13 institutions have become Affiliates of the collaboration, working more closely with the Centre and engaging more proactively with the media.

Science Media Savvy

The CSIRO sponsored the development of a media training website for scientists, which will be ready to launch in late 2012.

sciencemediasavvy.org is an online resource providing succinct hints and tips on doing interviews for radio, television and print. The site features videos of prominent scientists and journalists sharing their knowledge and conducting example interviews, as well as clear tip sheets.

Images and animations



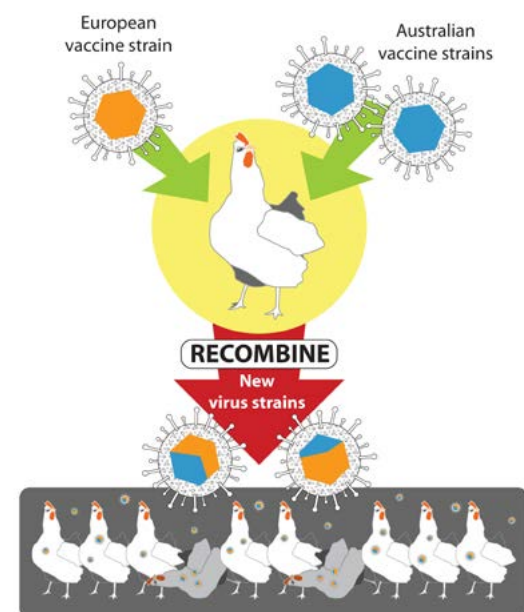
THE MYER
FOUNDATION

To help cater for the media's growing appetite for images and other visuals, the Centre worked with freelance graphic artists to create images and animations on several topics in the news. The pilot project included employing a resident graphics artist – Michael Helman – for a five week trial, which enabled a rapid turnaround of several news-related visuals. It was supported by a grant from the Myer Foundation.



Online media briefing on road safety from the Australasian College of Road Safety conference in Melbourne.

SCIENCE | MEDIA | SAVVY
Helping scientists work effectively
with the news media



Vaccines combine to produce new virus strains in chickens. Infographic created by the AusSMC

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS (CONT.)

Science news portal for journalists

The Australian Government's strategy, Inspiring Australia, awarded the AusSMC a grant to develop a new science news portal for journalists. Tentatively titled the 'Science Media Exchange', the password-protected website is expected to feature research announcements, embargoed material, story ideas, university updates and expert contacts for our region. This major project is currently in an early scoping phase with rollout expected in late 2013.

Science-media internships

With financial assistance from the Victorian Government, the Centre started work on an internship program for bright early to mid-career scientists in some of Australia's busiest newsrooms. Due to start in late 2012, the program will embed several scientists within the scrum of the newsroom to learn and work alongside prominent journalists. Hopefully the interns will use their experiences to continue contributing to the media throughout their careers.

Global update

The global Science Media Centre network continued to develop during the past 12 months. An exploratory committee has been formed in the US and several centres are being considered in Europe, India and China while existing centres continued to collaborate.

Through the network, Australian experts are being quoted in overseas media outlets. Similarly, Australian journalists have had increased access to experts and stories from the UK, Japan, New Zealand and Canada.

AusSMC Project Manager Nigel Kerby travelled to Vancouver in February, 2012, to attend the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) 2012 Annual Meeting. He presented to science journalists with colleagues from the UK, Canadian, New Zealand and Japanese SMCs and met with several overseas science journals alongside global SMC partners.

More information on the network is now available at sciencemediacentre.net.

Australia-Japan Foundation funding

The AusSMC has continued working closely with the Science Media Centre of Japan (SMCJ) thanks to continued funding from the Australia-Japan Foundation. This year saw a successful briefing in March with Australian, Japanese and British nuclear experts discussing the impact of Fukushima one year on, as well as the AusSMC coordinating expert comments from Australia, Japan, the UK and Canada on the topic. These have been contributing to the aim of increasing awareness of shared science interests in Australia and Japan.

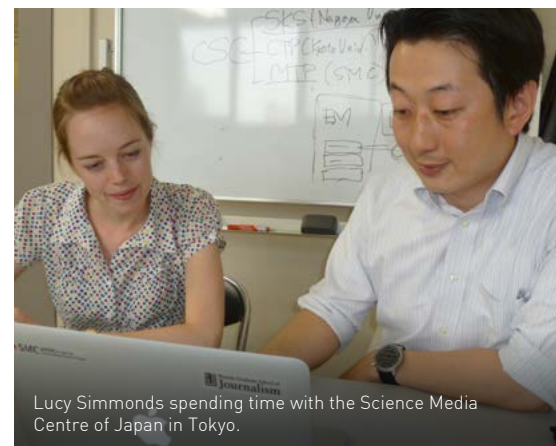
The Australia-Japan collaboration culminated recently with AusSMC Media Officer Lucy Simmonds spending time at the Tokyo office of the SMCJ in June to workshop new products to support Japanese journalists covering science stories and scientists working with the media.

I would suggest this is a ... fantastic idea.

News Ltd journalist when asked about the proposed Science news portal for journalists.



Staff from 5 SMCs (Australia, the UK, Canada, Japan and New Zealand) meet at the AAAS Conference in Vancouver.



Lucy Simmonds spending time with the Science Media Centre of Japan in Tokyo.

OVERVIEW OF ISSUES COVERED

Below is a brief summary of some of the key collaborations, briefings and Round-ups organised by the Australian Science Media Centre during the past 12 months. A full list is provided on pages 16-20.

Paralysed rats learn to walk again (Science)

May 2012

The Centre anticipated media attention when scientists reported that, with a combination of neuro-rehabilitation, electrical-chemical stimulation and a robotic harness, they were able to get paralysed rats to walk again.

Australian and UK expert comments helped clarify the Swiss study, which was published in the journal Science, for journalists. Issues addressed included the all-important question, is a method that works in rats likely to work in humans?

The experts' comments were picked up in around 150 media clips, including several daily papers, Ten News and international news sites.

The research came with some amazing photos and video which assisted its prominence including the top story on ABC News Online at one point.



The Square Kilometre Array

July 2011 and May 2012

In July, 2011, the Centre organised an online media briefing in the lead-up to an announcement on which country would host the world's largest radio telescope. The briefing explained what the Square Kilometre Array telescope was all about and how it would benefit Australia if it was built here.

Leading scientists and Australian Science Minister Kim Carr spoke from Canada, where they attended the last major international conference before the decision was due. About 40 media clips resulted.

When the long-awaited site announcement was finally made in May, 2012, the Centre swung into action, gathering comments from nine experts. The unexpected decision that Australia-New Zealand would share the project with South Africa generated plenty of news coverage, with more than 260 media items featuring the comments or interviews with the experts quoted.



Two of CSIRO's new ASKAP antennas at the Murchison Radio-astronomy Observatory in WA. Photo credit: WA Department of Commerce.

The dangers of youth – A Lancet series

April 2012

An online media briefing just before the launch of a special Lancet research series on youth helped thrust the issue onto the news agenda.

Modern-day culture, with its fast-food, binge drinking, cyber bullying and 'sexting', is taking its toll on our youth, yet there is little focus on the specific health challenges adolescents face. The research release coincided with the 45th Session of the United Nations Commission on Population Development in New York.

Two of the Australian scientists who contributed to the series spoke in the briefing, which generated 196 media clips, 65 of which were published overseas.

OVERVIEW OF ISSUES COVERED (CONT.)

Indonesian earthquake and tsunami warning

April 2012

The Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre issued an alert when a magnitude 8.6 earthquake struck off Indonesia's Sumatran coast on the evening of April 11. The Centre promptly circulated comments from seismologists and tsunami experts from Australia, America and the UK.

Despite the absence of a tsunami warning for Australia, the Rapid Reaction generated a total of 536 clips, with media outlets jumping on the experts' quotes and inviting them to appear in broadcast interviews.

Several global news agencies picked up the comments, as well as many of Australia's daily newspapers. The experts appeared on several programs including Network Ten's Breakfast.



Bring elephants to Australia? (Nature Comment piece)

February 2012

A provocative opinion piece in the journal Nature by an Australian scientist captured journalists' attention and imagination. The Centre proactively gathered embargoed comments from the author and independent experts to help put the piece's suggestions in context.

The author, Professor David Bowman, suggested that introducing wild elephants to Australia would help control invasive grasses and therefore lower bushfire risk. The piece divided Bowman's colleagues. Some experts dismissed it as unhelpful nonsense, while others encouraged the debate it generated.

The amount of coverage was remarkable, with 793 items detected in Australia and overseas. Outlets which covered the story included SBS World News Australia, ABC Radio National, The Sydney Morning Herald, The Daily Telegraph (UK) and The Vancouver Sun.



Elephants in the Outback?
Credit: Nature journal opinion piece

The Lancet series on drug addiction

January 2012

Medical journal The Lancet published a series of studies on illicit drug use around the world. The Centre hosted an online media briefing under embargo with four authors to help put the spotlight on amphetamine, cannabis, cocaine and opioid addictions. The Australian-initiated research explored global drug use trends, the effectiveness of drug policies, and the impact of global health treaties.

The volume of media coverage was significant, with at least 651 articles generated. Interestingly, about 400 of these were from overseas outlets. The focus of the coverage was a classic example of the "local angle" taking priority. Despite the variety of findings and potential story angles, most coverage focused on the statistic that Australia and New Zealand had the highest number of cannabis users. This angle appeared to "spread" to overseas outlets.



OVERVIEW OF ISSUES COVERED (CONT.)

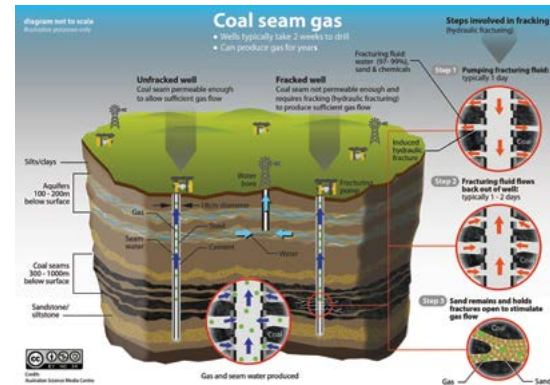
Getting your head around...coal seam gas

December 2011 and May 2012

Coal seam gas was one of the most controversial topics of the year. Yet, among all the politics, the science behind the issue often struggled to get a look-in in the media.

So the Centre organised a series of online background briefings with credible experts to help inform journalists on the key issues. The first two briefings looked at the physical process of coal seam gas and the potential problems concerning water. The third briefing compared coal seam gas with other energy options. This briefing coincided with the launch of an info-graphic and factsheet on coal seam gas, intended as handy resources that journalists could refer back to or reproduce when needed.

The briefings were not intended to prompt direct coverage, but they generated 25 clips in total. These included ABC local radio, daily newspapers and AAP.



Coal seam gas infographic commissioned by the AusSMC with input from several experts.

Draft revised dietary guidelines from the NHMRC

December 2011

The Centre worked with the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) to launch its draft revised dietary guidelines for public comment. The guidelines contained updated dietary advice based on the latest scientific evidence and revealed the extent of Australians' unhealthy eating habits.

The Centre hosted a physical briefing, before the guidelines' public release, with experts who compiled them. The briefing was also streamed online. It also compiled a Round-up of comments from top experts in the nutrition field. The briefing and Round-up were quoted in a total of 363 media clips; including commercial radio stations 2GB and 3AW, ABC News 24 and daily newspapers.



We need to eat more vegies

YOUR parents were right - you need to eat your veggies. That's one of the recommendations of the new Australian Dietary Guidelines.

SUGAR - sweetened drinks and an increased risk of excessive weight gain in children and adults.

LOW-fat milk and reduced risk of heart disease and some cancers.

FRUIT and reduced risk of heart disease.

NON-STARCHY vegetables and reduced risk of some cancers.

WHOLEGRAIN cereals and less risk of heart disease.

YOUR parents were right - you need to eat your veggies. That's one of the recommendations of the new Australian Dietary Guidelines.

The report, released to the National Health and Medical Research Council, says Australians need to eat plenty of tables as well as fruit, grain, lean meat and poultry.

The consequences of not healthily were disastrous, w Dr Amanda Lee, who added: do not start to radically im our diet we are going to tsunami of poor health

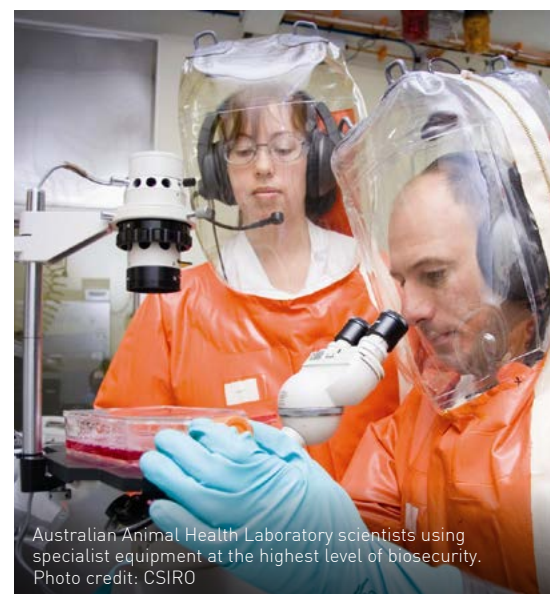
An inside look at the world's leading biosecurity research facility

November 2011

A physical briefing and tour of the world's most advanced biosecurity research facility was a highlight for AusSMC staff this year. CSIRO approached the Centre to help introduce to journalists a new high-security area within its Australian Animal Health Laboratory in Geelong. The internationally shared facility is dedicated to research on infectious diseases that affect human, domestic animal and wildlife health.

There was an opportunity for journalists, photographers and AusSMC staff to tour the facility with the lab's director before it 'went live' and was protected under the highest level of biosecurity. Security for the tour was an experience in itself, with participants having to change their clothes and shower on the way out. As a precaution, nothing that entered the facility could leave without being thoroughly washed.

Coverage included articles in the Herald Sun and interviews on Network Ten's The Project and ABC Radio. The briefing generated about 105 clips in total.



Australian Animal Health Laboratory scientists using specialist equipment at the highest level of biosecurity. Photo credit: CSIRO

OVERVIEW OF ISSUES COVERED (CONT.)

Climate change for our nearest neighbours

November 2011

A new Australian study led by CSIRO and the Bureau of Meteorology on climate change in the Pacific painted a picture of rising sea levels, increasing temperatures and growing ocean acidity for our nearest neighbours. An online briefing was organised for journalists to hear from two of the report's lead authors. This briefing highlighted the usefulness of the online briefing system with 20 journalists tuned in including eight from Pacific nations such as Papua New Guinea and Samoa.

Bird flu rears its head again

August 2011

On August 30, the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation urged heightened readiness and surveillance against a possible major resurgence of H5N1 Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza. There were signs that a mutant strain of the deadly bird flu virus was spreading in Asia and beyond.

The Centre swiftly and proactively circulated five sets of comments from Australian infectious disease experts. The experts put the outbreak into perspective, outlining its seriousness overseas but calling for calm in Australia, which was not on the high alert list. A total of 266 media clippings quoted the experts, with items appearing in outlets including The Australian, AAP, ABC radio and international news sites.

Releasing modified mosquitos in Cairns to combat dengue fever

August 2011

When international journal Nature approached the Centre to arrange a news briefing on Australian dengue fever research, few expected it to escalate into one of the biggest science stories of the year. The study suggested that infecting wild mosquitos with bacteria that protected them from the dengue virus could be a sustainable way to reduce dengue fever.

The briefing helped journalists understand the research's significance, and television and photo opportunities helped boost coverage. The media jumped on the story, with at least 793 clips in total. Coverage included Australia's major television news bulletins and major daily papers, as well as international news agency Reuters and the Washington Post.

London riots

August 2011

Everyone was hungry for answers when riots erupted in London in August 2011. The Centre sent out comments from an Australian social scientist and a UK psychologist. The comments put the situation into historical context and called for authorities to learn what they could from the mayhem. The comments gained more than 300 media hits in Australia, mostly online.



Professor Scott O'Neill inspects the first Wolbachia Aedes aegypti to be released in North Queensland. Photo credit: Eliminate Dengue program.



Professor Craig Simmons speaks live to The Midday report on ABC TV after a groundwater media briefing in Sydney. Photo: AusSMC

OVERVIEW OF ISSUES COVERED (CONT.)

Dog diagnosed with Hendra

July 2011

Authorities announced that a dog had been diagnosed with Hendra virus. It was the first time an animal other than a bat, horse or human had been known to contract the disease. The mysterious and deadly virus had already claimed four human lives in Australia, and the media jumped on the story when tests confirmed the disease in a Queensland family's pet.

The Centre sought a comment from the Director of CSIRO's Australian Animal Health Laboratory and sent it out with a statement from the Queensland Health, detailing the situation and necessary safety precautions. Almost 200 media clips quoted the experts. Authorities ordered the dog, Rusty, to be euthanised to prevent the infection from spreading further.



Carbon price announcement

July 2011 and May 2012

The Australian Government announced its controversial Carbon Price Package on Sunday July 10, 2011. The announcement kicked off months of debate, scaremongering and protests. The Centre issued the first of four Rapid Reactions of expert comments on the carbon price on the day of the initial announcement. Environmental scientists and economists generally seemed to welcome the proposed legislation as a step in the right direction. The first round of expert reaction appeared in 85 media clips. Rapid Reactions after the Bill was passed generated another 80 media hits.

Academic says tax is

By CALLUM JOHNSON
callum.johnson@thechronicle.com.au
UNIVERSITY of Southern Queensland's Professor John Cole called the carbon tax a "once in a generation step forward as a progressive member of the international community" for all of Australia.

The director of the Australian Centre for Sustainable Business and Development at USQ is a known proponent of the carbon tax

and said climate change was an issue that needed to be taken seriously by both Australia and rest of the world.

"Climate change unchecked ranks as the greatest threat to the future of humanity and today Australia began to pull its weight consistent with its capacities," Professor Cole said.

"Admittedly, there is a long way to go in the transition to a low

TAXING TIMES

How the carbon tax will roll out

- Carbon emissions tax for the 500 biggest polluters starts on July 1, 2012
- Tax moves to an emissions trading scheme in 2015
- Tax to begin at \$23 a tonne and rise by 2.5% a year until 2015
- Electricity generation, stationary energy, some business transport, waste, industrial processes and fugitive emissions will be covered by the initial tax
- Average households will have a \$9.90 weekly cost rise
- Average household will receive assistance of \$10.10 weekly
- Free carbon permits will be given to the most emissions-intensive and trade-exposed industries
- The government wants to cut pollution by 80% by 2050 (Source: Federal Government)

SMOKE QUIT DRUG FEAR

Heart attack risk

POPULAR quit smoking drug, Champix, may increase the risk of heart attacks and strokes, a major study has found.

Thousands of Australians use Champix to help them stop smoking, but British and US scientists say it can increase the risk of "serious cardiovascular events".

Australian medicines watchdog the Therapeutic Goods Administration said it would "review the safety profile" of Champix.

Australia's Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute director Garry Jennings said doctors should prescribe the drug with caution, "however, on balance, the dangers of smoking far outweigh the dangers of any risks associated with these findings". He said the overall risk of heart attack or stroke while taking the drug remained small and Champix should not be withdrawn yet.

Quit drug's link to heart problems

SMOKERS taking a common medication to help them quit their addictive habit have been warned they face an increased risk of

Smoking cessation drug linked to increased risk of serious cardiac events

July 2011

Scientists from the US and UK found that a drug commonly used in Australia to help people quit smoking was associated with an increased risk of cardiac events, including heart failure. The findings were published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal.

The Centre sought an expert comment from a prominent Australian heart disease scientist and distributed it to journalists before the story hit the headlines. The comment put the research into context, highlighting that the dangers of smoking far outweighed the dangers of the risks associated with the findings. The comments were used in at least 180 news reports.



AUSSMC STAFF OUT AND ABOUT

The AusSMC team was kept busy during the year giving presentations, sitting on judging panels and, on occasion, speaking directly in the media. The following is a summary of presentations, judging panels, steering committees and media clippings or interviews undertaken by AusSMC staff members.

Steering Committees and panels

- ANU Climate Change Institute Steering Committee (SE)
- Climate Commission (SE)

Talks and presentations

July 2011 – National Youth Science Forum presentation (ES)

July 2011 – UniSA journalism students (GH and ES)

February 2012 – Regional Victorian Fairfax and Elliott Newspaper Group Editors at Bendigo Advertiser offices (SE and GH)

May 2012 – CSIRO after dinner speech (SE)

May 2012 – CRC Association Conference (LB and SE)

June 2012 – University of Sydney graduation address (SE)

Media interviews or articles written

Sept 2011: Medical Law international – “Engaging with the news” (ES)

Dec 2011: ABC WA Statewide – “Top 10 weird and wonderful science stories of 2011” (LS)

April 2012: Chemistry in Australia – “Science and the media, a two-way street” (GH)

April 2012: Croakeyblog – “Do journalists actually read the research they’re reporting on?” (LB)

April 2012: The Punch – “Declare conflict of interest or risk public confidence” (LB)

May 2012: The Punch – “My year with the Climate Commission” (SE)

Other

Aug 2011 – Judge of 2011 Banksia Environmental Awards (SE)

September 2011 – Judges of New Scientist Prize for Science Writing (ES & GH)

September 2011 – Judge for CSIRO Science Journalism award (SE)

March 2012 – Judging panel for CRC Association Early Career Researchers Showcase (SE)

Legend:

SE – Susannah Elliott

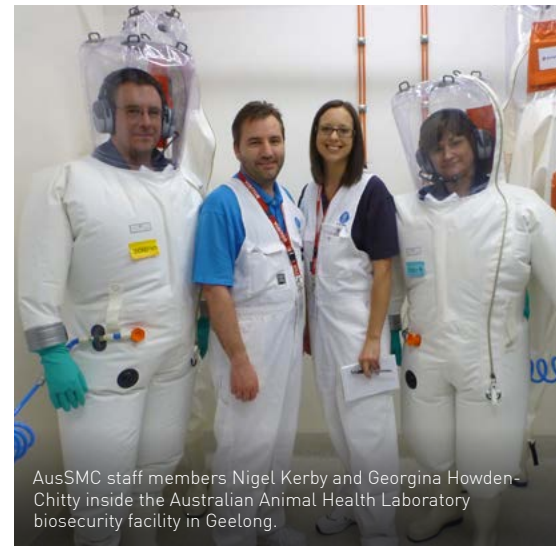
LB – Lyndal Byford

NK – Nigel Kerby

ES – Ed Sykes

GH – Georgina Howden-Chitty

LS – Lucy Simmonds



AusSMC staff members Nigel Kerby and Georgina Howden-Chitty inside the Australian Animal Health Laboratory biosecurity facility in Geelong.

Do journalists actually read the research they're reporting on?

Declare conflict of interest or risk public confidence

Yet sadly, as a new study just published in the *Medical Journal of Australia* shows, actually getting hold of this information about academics at universities around Australia is often not a simple process.

The survey of Australian universities by Simon Chapman and his colleagues showed that of the 25 institutions who responded, none required their academics to state their conflicts of interest on their website profile. Perhaps more importantly, although the researchers found public comment policies for 21 universities, “none required that staff declare potential conflict of interests to media when making a public comment”.

My year with the Climate Commission

And if you're coming to this article hoping to see yet more trashing of experts, you might as well stop reading now. It's human nature to question information that's painful, but let it not cloud the messenger.

My year on the Climate Commission has come to an end and just over a year, so it's a good time to reflect on my experiences working in one of the most difficult and controversial areas in the current political and economic landscape.

Luckily the commissioners are a helluva bunch who have maintained their composure despite the long hours and sometimes hostile responses they have to contend with. For the record, my reasons for leaving the Commission are simple.

Would knowing an academic has shares in a mining company affect how much trust you place in their comments on climate change? How about if the academic sat on the board? Or owned the company? All of these are potential conflicts of interest and all might influence how much weight the media and the public place on that expert's opinion.



Online media briefing on natural disasters from the IUGG conference in Melbourne.

STAFF AND BOARD

Lyndal Byford returned as Media Manager in February, 2012, after 12 months' maternity leave.

Dr Ed Sykes who had replaced Lyndal for the duration of her leave returned to the UK Science Media Centre in April, 2012 after a successful 15 month stay in Australia.

The Centre extended its staff this year to help cope with increasing demand. Carol Atkinson was appointed in July 2011 as Business Relations Manager. The media team was expanded with Media Officer Lucy Simmonds joining the team in August 2011 and Annika Dean joined in September 2011 as media assistant.

Office Manager Marilyn Arnold took maternity leave during the period.

At 30 June, 2012, the AusSMC staff list consisted of:

- **Dr Susannah Elliott** – CEO
- **Lyndal Byford** – Media Manager
- **Georgina Howden-Chitty** – Media Officer
- **Nigel Kerby** – Project Manager
- **Marilyn Arnold** – Office Manager (part time)
- **Carol Atkinson** – Business Relations Manager
- **Lucy Simmonds** – Media Officer
- **Annika Dean** – Media assistant

2011/2012 Board Members

The AusSMC Board is chaired by Peter Yates AM and meets four times a year. Special thanks go to Jim Carroll who stepped down as Deputy Chair at the end of 2011 and Mike Rann who stepped down as AusSMC board member in October 2011. Current deputy chairs are Robyn Williams from the ABC and Dr Graham Mitchell, Chief Scientist of Victoria.

Board members at 30 June 2012 were:

Peter Yates AM (Chair) Chairman, RiAus and Chairman, Faculty of Business and Economics, The University of Melbourne

Jim Carroll CEO, MS Australia

John Croll CEO, Sentia Media

Dr John Curran General Manager: Communication, CSIRO

Rob Douglas Chief Operating Officer, ResMed Inc

Michael Ellies Representing APN News and Media Ltd

Fiona Fox Director, UK Science Media Centre

Peter Fray Editor-in-chief, Sydney Morning Herald and Sun-Herald (Fairfax Media)

Phil Gardner Editor, Herald Sun (News Ltd)

Brad Hatch Director of Communications, Fairfax Media

Professor Mary O'Kane NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer

Melvin Mansell State Editorial Director, SA, WA & NT, News Ltd

Dr Graham Mitchell (Deputy Chair) Chief Scientist, State Govt of Victoria

Professor Rob Morrison Freelance science communicator

Paul Ramadge Editor-in-chief, The Age (Fairfax Media)

Professor Rob Saint Dean of the Faculty of Science, The University of Melbourne

The Hon Jay Weatherill Premier, Government of South Australia

Robyn Williams (Deputy Chair) Presenter, Science Show, ABC

Dr Paul Willis Director, RiAus

The NSW Government was also represented by Peter Leihn.



AusSMC staff from left: Georgina Howden-Chitty, Nigel Kerby, Annika Dean, Carol Atkinson, Dr Ed Sykes, Lyndal Byford, Marilyn Arnold, Lucy Simmonds and CEO Dr Susannah Elliott



AusSMC chair Peter Yates AM presents SA Premier the Hon Mike Rann with a parting gift on his retirement from politics and the AusSMC board. Photo: AusSMC



AusSMC board meeting in progress at the Science Exchange in Adelaide. Photo: AusSMC

SCIENCE ADVISORY PANEL

The Science Advisory Panel at 30 June 2012 consisted of:

Professor Snow Barlow

University of Melbourne

Professor Robin Batterham AO

President, Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering (ATSE)

Professor Lyn Beazley AO

Chief Scientist of Western Australia

Emeritus Professor Max Brennan AO

Former Chief Scientist for South Australia

Professor Adrienne Clarke AC

Chancellor, La Trobe University, Melbourne

Professor Alan Cooper

University of Adelaide

Professor Marcello Costa

Flinders University

Professor Derek Denton AC

University of Melbourne

Professor Peter Doherty AC

University of Melbourne

Professor Tim Flannery

Macquarie University

Professor Michael Holland

President, Science and Technology Australia

Professor Bryan Gaensler

University of Sydney

Dr Geoff Garrett AO

Queensland Chief Scientist

Baroness Professor Susan Greenfield

CBE

University of Oxford

Professor Richard Head

CSIRO Preventative Health Flagship Program

Professor Robert Hill

SA Museum and University of Adelaide

Professor Marcia Langton AM

University of Melbourne

Emeritus Professor Ian Lowe AO

Griffith University and President, ACF

Professor Caroline McMillen

Vice-Chancellor, University of Newcastle

Emeritus Professor Nancy Millis AC

MBE

University of Melbourne

Emeritus Professor Sir Gustav Nossal

AC CBE

University of Melbourne

Professor Linda Rosenman

President, Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (CHASS)

Professor Michelle Simmons

University of New South Wales

Professor Fiona Stanley AC

Director, Telethon Institute for Child Health Research

Professor Patricia Vickers-Rich

Monash University

Professor Malcolm Walter

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

Professor Bob Williamson AO

University of Melbourne



Artist's impression of dishes that will make up the SKA radio telescope. Credit: Swinburne Astronomy Productions/SKA Program Development Office.

RAPID REACTIONS, ROUND-UPS AND BRIEFINGS

Further information on each of these issues can be found on our website at www.smc.org.au

July 2011 – June 2012

28/06/2012	Round Up	Mind reading to have silent, still conversations (Current Biology) – experts respond
28/06/2012	Rapid Reaction	The carbon price kicks in – expert responds
26/06/2012	Briefing	Cities under stress – urban life and extreme weather
25/06/2012	Briefing	Staying healthy in extreme weather
22/06/2012	Round Up	Global trends in suicide (Lancet)
20/06/2012	Briefing	Gearing up for Rio+20 - Live from Brazil
19/06/2012	Rapid Reaction	Earthquake hits south-east Victoria
13/06/2012	Round Up	UK Comments: GM cotton, insecticide use and biodiversity
6/06/2012	Round Up	CT scans in childhood and cancer risk (The Lancet)
1/06/2012	Round Up	Eating dark chocolate is a cost-effective way to prevent heart disease (BMJ)
31/05/2012	Round Up	Paralysed rats learn to walk again (Science)
29/05/2012	Round Up	UK Comments: Shift work and cancer
29/05/2012	Round Up	Pain killers linked to reduced risk of skin cancer (CANCER)
28/05/2012	Rapid Reaction	Revisions to the Murray-Darling Basin Plan released
26/05/2012	Rapid Reaction	Square Kilometre Array Announcement
22/05/2012	Briefing	Getting your head around... coal seam gas – part 3: Is it worth it?
17/05/2012	Briefing	1000 years of climate data confirms Australia's warming
15/05/2012	Round Up	UK Comments: Unlocking the genetic code of schizophrenia – expert responds
10/05/2012	Round Up	The risks and benefits of inducing labour (BMJ) – expert responds
8/05/2012	Round Up	BPA alters development of breast tissue in monkeys (PNAS) – experts respond
4/05/2012	Round Up	Higher risk of birth defects from assisted reproduction (NEJM) – experts respond
3/05/2012	Round Up	UK/Canadian comments: Influenza and biosecurity
30/04/2012	Rapid Reaction	Koala protected under national environment law – experts comment
27/04/2012	Round Up	Wind farms affect local temperature (Nature Climate Change) – an expert responds



CSIRO Australian Animal Health Laboratory in Geelong, Victoria. Photo: CSIRO.

RAPID REACTIONS, ROUND-UPS AND BRIEFINGS (CONT.)

26/04/2012	Round Up	Eating more berries may reduce cognitive decline in the elderly (Annals of Neurology)
24/04/2012	Briefing	The dangers of youth - Lancet series
18/04/2012	Round Up	Protein with dual benefit for bone health – experts respond
17/04/2012	Rapid Reaction	National Greenhouse Accounts released – experts respond
11/04/2012	Rapid Reaction	Indonesian earthquake and tsunami warning
10/04/2012	Round Up	UK Comments: dental x-rays and meningioma
5/04/2012	Round Up	How vaccine scares unfold (PLoS Computational Biology)
3/04/2012	Rapid Reaction	The end of the war on drugs? – experts respond
1/04/2012	Rapid Reaction	CSIRO reaps Wi-Fi windfall - experts respond
29/03/2012	Briefing	Planet Under Pressure - live from London
28/03/2012	Round Up	H1N1 vaccine linked to child narcolepsy (PLoS ONE) – experts respond
22/03/2012	Round Up	Australia's megafaunal extinction – cause and effect (Science)
15/03/2012	Rapid Reaction	State of the Climate 2012
14/03/2012	Round Up	Mobile phones and neurodevelopment in mice (Scientific Reports)
9/03/2012	Round Up	Engineering whole organs (The Lancet)
8/03/2012	Rapid Reaction	Solar Storm
8/03/2012	Round Up	UK Comments: Plutonium at Fukushima as published in Scientific Reports
8/03/2012	Round Up	UK Comments: Commonly used medication could have an impact on racial bias
7/03/2012	Round Up	Oestrogen-only HRT reduces breast cancer risk (Lancet Oncology)
6/03/2012	Rapid Reaction	South East Australian floods -experts respond
6/03/2012	Round Up	Fukushima - one year on - expert comments
5/03/2012	Briefing	Fukushima - one year on
1/03/2012	Round Up	Internet based treatment for chronic fatigue syndrome (The Lancet)- experts respond
1/03/2012	Round Up	Reducing melanoma risk with vitamin A – experts respond
21/02/2012	Briefing	Medicines Australia: Clinical trial seminar
16/02/2012	Rapid Reaction	UK Comments: Experts react to documents allegedly leaked from Heartland Institute
10/02/2012	Round Up	Cannabis use and car crashes (BMJ)
9/02/2012	Rapid Reaction	Airbus A380 wing cracks
5/02/2012	Rapid Reaction	Scientists want to create designer babies with three parents
1/02/2012	Round Up	Is sugar as toxic as alcohol?
31/01/2012	Round Up	Bring elephants to Australia? (Nature Comment piece) – experts respond





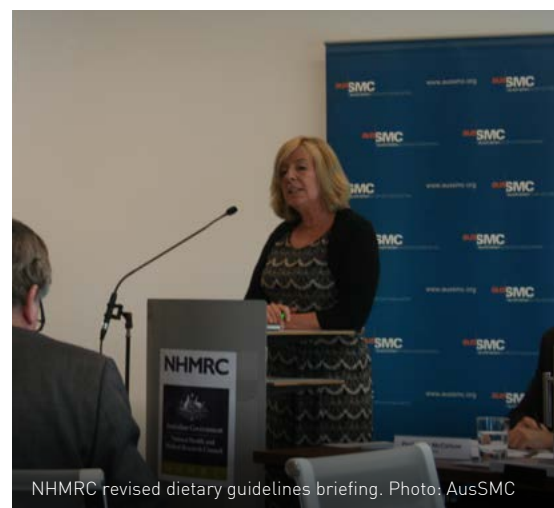
One of CSIRO's ASKAP antennas at the MRO, installed with a revolutionary phased array feed (PAF) receiver developed for ASKAP. Credit: Barry Turner, CSIRO.

RAPID REACTIONS, ROUND-UPS AND BRIEFINGS (CONT.)

24/01/2012	Round Up	Embryonic stem cells used to treat eye disease (The Lancet)
23/01/2012	Briefing	Groundwater - Australia's next crisis?
17/01/2012	Round Up	HRT and the risk of breast cancer – a review of the Million Women Study
13/01/2012	Rapid Reaction	Phobos-Grunt space probe Earth re-entry
10/01/2012	Round Up	Gas drilling and animal health
6/01/2012	Round Up	Cognitive decline can begin as early as 45 (BMJ)
5/01/2012	Briefing	Lancet series on drug addiction
21/12/2011	Rapid Reaction	UK Comments: Bioweapons - should science be censored?
20/12/2011	Briefing	Getting your head around Coal seam gas - Part 2: Water Worries
16/12/2011	Briefing	Getting your head around Coal seam gas - Part 1: The Process
14/12/2011	Rapid Reaction	Higgs boson evidence announcement
12/12/2011	Round Up	Revised dietary guidelines from the NHMRC – experts respond
12/12/2011	Briefing	Revised dietary guidelines from the NHMRC
12/12/2011	Rapid Reaction	Agreement at UN COP meeting in Durban
9/12/2011	Rapid Reaction	Ian Plimer launches new book on climate change
28/11/2011	Briefing	The Southern Ocean - Australia's life jacket
28/11/2011	Rapid Reaction	Draft Murray-Darling plan released – experts respond
25/11/2011	Rapid Reaction	World's largest marine reserve to be in Australian waters
25/11/2011	Briefing	New data - climate of change for our nearest neighbours
23/11/2011	Rapid Reaction	UK comments: New release of climate emails from University of East Anglia, UK
19/11/2011	Rapid Reaction	IPCC report on risks of extreme weather events – Australian experts respond
17/11/2011	Rapid Reaction	Youth self-harm (The Lancet)
16/11/2011	Briefing	An inside look at the world's leading biosecurity research facility
15/11/2011	Rapid Reaction	Promising stem cell programs halted - experts respond
15/11/2011	Round Up	Are intelligent children more likely to use illicit drugs as adults? (JECH)
15/11/2011	Round Up	UK comments: Link between the contraceptive pill and prostate cancer (BMJ Open)
8/11/2011	Rapid Reaction	Clean Energy Bill passes through the Senate
25/10/2011	Rapid Reaction	Soft drinks and violence (Injury Prevention - A BMJ journal)
24/10/2011	Rapid Reaction	Culling great white sharks in Western Australia
21/10/2011	Rapid Reaction	New data on climate change from the Berkeley Earth Surface Temperature project
20/10/2011	Round Up	Mobile phones and risk of brain tumours
19/10/2011	Rapid Reaction	European Court of Justice decision on patents on Embryonic stem cell research
18/10/2011	Round Up	Does high blood pressure during pregnancy increase the risk of birth defects (BMJ)
13/10/2011	Round Up	Stem cells for liver disease in mice (Nature)
12/10/2011	Rapid Reaction	Carbon pricing legislation passed through the House of Representatives
11/10/2011	Rapid Reaction	Olympic Dam mine expansion approved
11/10/2011	Round Up	Dietary supplements and death in older women (Archives of Internal Medicine)
10/10/2011	Rapid Reaction	Cleaning up the Rena oil spill in New Zealand
7/10/2011	Round Up	Ultraviolet A radiation and skin cancer (Journal of Investigative Dermatology)
5/10/2011	Round Up	Escapee GM canola plant populations (PLoS ONE)
5/10/2011	Round Up	Triploid human embryonic stem cells
4/10/2011	Rapid Reaction	Australian shares Nobel prize for physics
28/09/2011	Round Up	Heart risk and pain relief medication (PLoS)
26/09/2011	Briefing	Drastic measures to combat climate change (Canberra)
23/09/2011	Rapid Reaction	NASA's UARS satellite - re-entry on 24 Sept

RAPID REACTIONS, ROUND-UPS AND BRIEFINGS (CONT.)

23/09/2011	Rapid Reaction	Aboriginal genome reveals new insights into early humans (Science)
21/09/2011	Round Up	Italian seismologists on trial for manslaughter
13/09/2011	Round Up	UK/NZ comments: Fatherhood and testosterone levels (PNAS)
12/09/2011	Briefing	CRC Care: Environmental contamination (Adelaide Hilton)
7/09/2011	Round Up	One drink per day and women's health
5/09/2011	Briefing	Getting your head around... climate modelling
1/09/2011	Briefing	Science of road safety (Melbourne)
30/08/2011	Rapid Reaction	Bird flu rears its head again
26/08/2011	Round Up	Asteroid dust from the Hayabusa capsule
23/08/2011	Briefing	Mosquitoes modified with Wolbachia to increases resistance to dengue fever
16/08/2011	Round Up	UK comments: Radioactive sulphur from Fukushima detected in California (PNAS)
15/08/2011	Round Up	Studies on sedentary/active time and their effects on our health (BJSM/ The Lancet)
10/08/2011	Rapid Reaction	London riots
26/07/2011	Rapid Reaction	Dog diagnosed with Hendra
14/07/2011	Rapid Reaction	Attack on CSIRO GM trial crops
14/07/2011	Briefing	Understanding Floods: Questions and Answers
10/07/2011	Rapid Reaction	Carbon price announcement
7/07/2011	Rapid Reaction	Legislation review recommends status quo for Australian stem cell science
7/07/2011	Briefing	The Square Kilometre Array - Australia's final pitch
6/07/2011	Round Up	Moderate salt reduction benefits questioned (The Cochrane Library/AJH)
5/07/2011	Rapid Reaction	Gippsland earthquake rocks Melbourne
4/07/2011	Round Up	Smoking cessation drug linked to increased risk of cardiac events (CMAJ)
5/07/2011	Briefing	Man Vs The World (IUGG conference)
4/07/2011	Briefing	Super-structures! (IUGG conference)
4/07/2011	Briefing	Predicting natural disasters (IUGG conference)

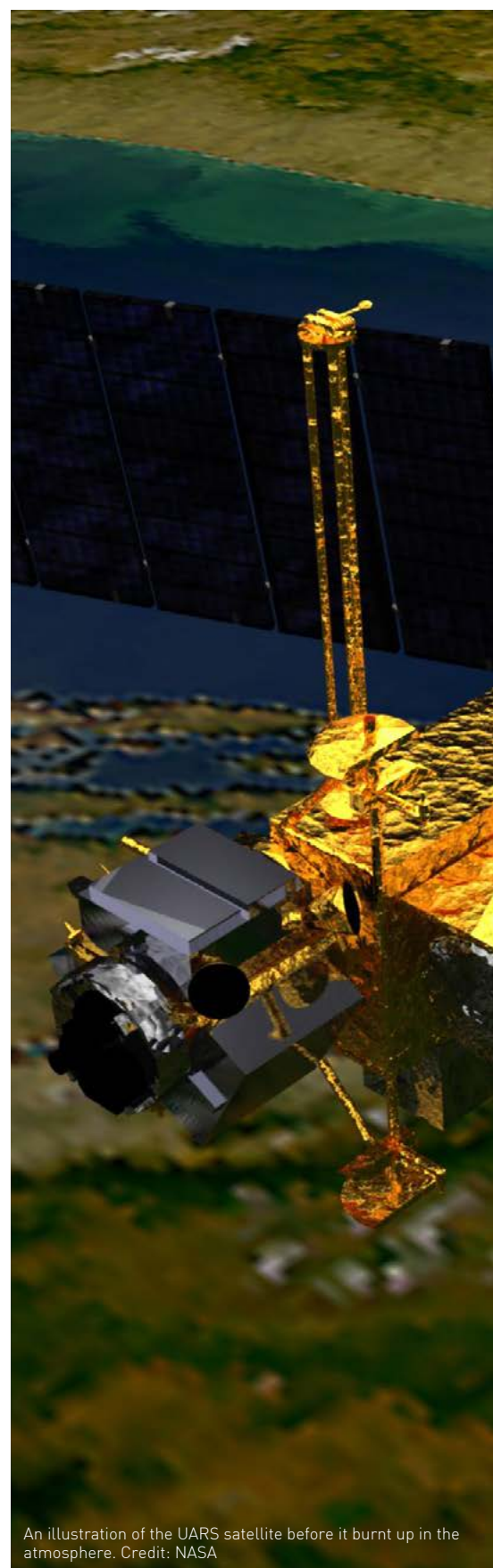


NHMRC revised dietary guidelines briefing. Photo: AusSMC

FINANCIALS

Australian Science Media Centre Incorporated income and expenditure statement for the year ended 30 June, 2012.

	2012	2011
	\$	\$
INCOME		
Affiliates Funding	40,000.00	-
Sponsorship Received	511,535.60	549,580.18
Project Funds	117,941.07	161,288.79
	<u>669,476.67</u>	<u>710,868.97</u>
OTHER INCOME		
Interest Received	27,985.12	37,313.88
Other Income	12,908.38	-
	<u>40,893.50</u>	<u>37,313.88</u>
TOTAL INCOME	<u>710,370.17</u>	<u>748,182.85</u>
EXPENDITURE		
Board Member Expenses	7,408.81	7,968.83
Depreciation	17,536.63	6,329.82
Office Expenses	67,018.01	65,930.69
Programs/Project	79,999.85	100,586.37
Marketing and Development Costs	15,623.12	27,437.62
Travelling Expenses	8,752.52	17,273.70
Wages/Payroll	570,128.42	536,253.99
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	<u>766,467.36</u>	<u>761,781.02</u>
(Loss) Profit	<u>(56,097.19)</u>	<u>(13,598.17)</u>
(Loss) Profit for the year	<u>(56,097.19)</u>	<u>(13,598.17)</u>
Retained surplus at the beginning of the financial year	227,173.43	240,771.60
Retained surplus at the end of the financial year	<u>171,076.24</u>	<u>227,173.43</u>



An illustration of the UARS satellite before it burnt up in the atmosphere. Credit: NASA

SPONSORS

The AusSMC is grateful to the following supporters during 2011-2012:

Foundation Sponsors



Gold Sponsors



Supporters



Affiliates

The AusSMC acknowledges the following Affiliates of the Science Media Collaboration who have joined during the 2012 pilot year:



www.smc.org.au

Positive Hendra test on dog bringings call for more research

High blood pressure in early pregnancy linked
to birth defects

Study finds risk of heart damage up 41%, but blames hypertension not drug

Scientists have asked
for help in their
fight against
terrorists.
of Homeland
work with the
vaccines against
which are seen as
nuclear warfare.
of Martyr Jeggo
were interested
ing technology,
of Homeland
ter-asking about
s," he said.

develop anti-
tions that could
etter equipment
or their troops,
anthrax scare."
opens a new
ur" area at its
alth Laboratory
be the most
id.
n laboratory, to
e Minister Kim
entists to work
bugs, including
ah and hendra

The Geelong laboratory is already
renowned in the science world as a
result of Dr Linfa Wang's break-
through in finding a link between bats
and the SARS virus. Bats will form
a major part of experiments at the lab,
which also has 120 monkeys used for
HIV research.

The laboratory was mentioned in
the Hollywood blockbuster *Con-
tagion*. In the film, scientists receive
a sample from Geelong that helps
them fight a flu-like epidemic that
came from a bat infecting a pig.

Prof Jeggo said vigilance against
diseases was necessary – another
SARS-like virus could be around the
corner.

"We do have these new and emerg-
ing viruses. And we don't know
where they are going to come from,"
he said.

"If you have had the pleasures of
seeing the film *Contagion* ... that's
what were dealing with here. That is
the likely scenario.

"It's not so much those four
(hendra, ebola, SARS and nipah); it's
probably one we don't know about."

"Most of the satellite will burn up on re-entry, with perhaps as
many as 26 stronger or harder small pieces surviving to reach
the surface," editor Jonathan Nally said in a statement.

"But with the majority of the Earth comprising oceans or
uninhabited (or very sparsely populated) remote regions, the
chances are overwhelming that any pieces of UARS that survive
re-entry will fall harmlessly and never be seen again."

Heart patients, elderly warned about painkillers

Dr Bryce Vissel, Head of Research into Neural plasticity and Regeneration at the Garvan
Institute of medical research said the study "offers enormous hope for recovery for people
suffering from genetic disorders."

Elephants crash the eco-debate

Mosquito trial wipes out dengue fever

Russian Mars probe to crash soon, with
world watching

**STUDY FAULTS RESEARCH
LINKING HORMONE THERAPY TO
CANCER**

A VICTORIAN repro-
duction expert supports a
push by Australian scien-
tists to trial using the DNA
of three parents to prevent
babies inheriting life-
threatening diseases.

The technique could stop
women passing mitochon-
drial diseases, which can
cause conditions including

'Small chance' satellite may hit
Australia

Matthew Sadler
September 23, 2011

UVA a risk factor

Plays bigger role in skin cancer than suspected