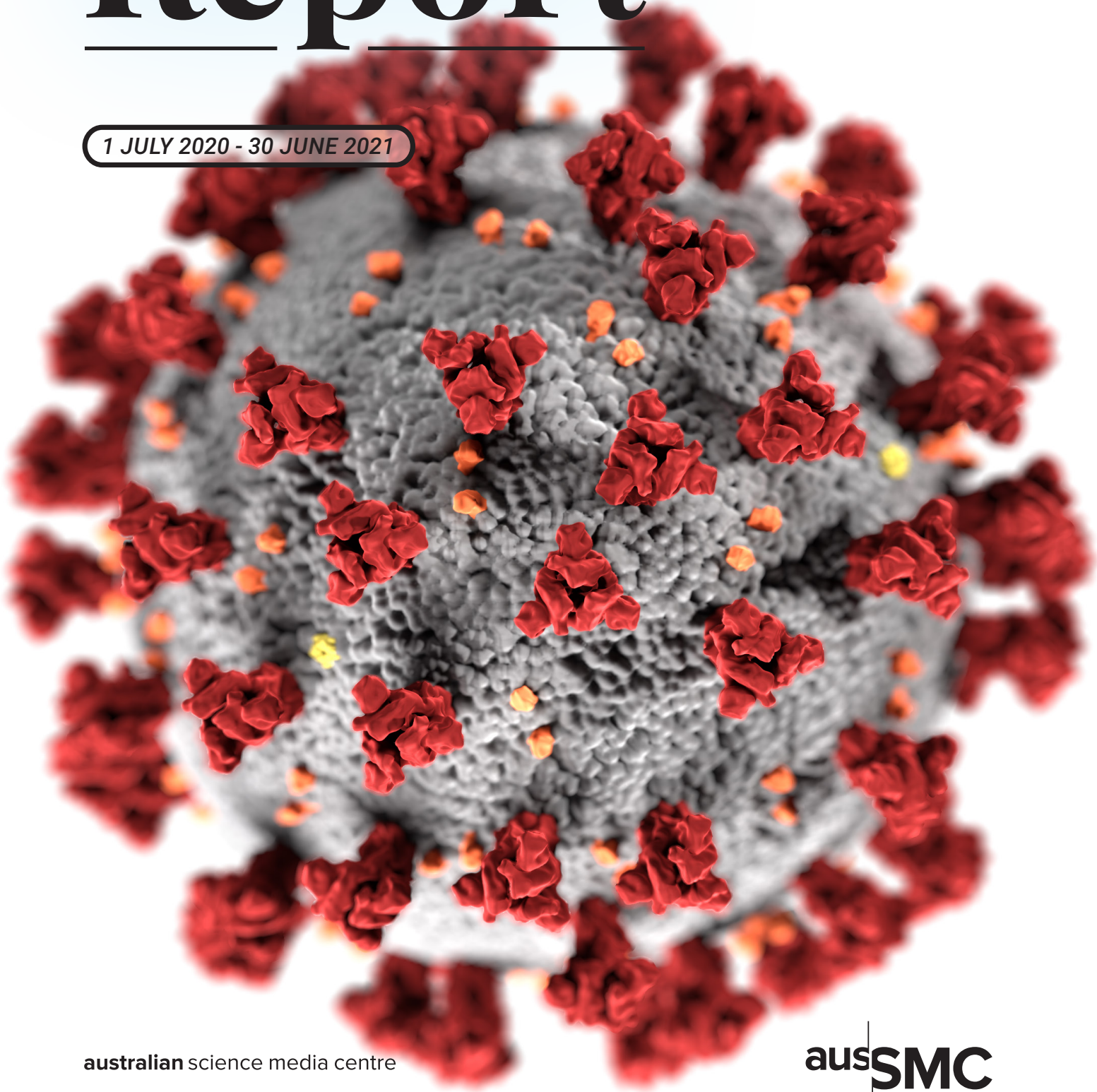


Annual Report

1 JULY 2020 - 30 JUNE 2021



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Australian Science Media
Centre Inc.

Annual Review 1 July 2020 to
30 June 2021

Designed and produced by: Emily
Erickson and the Australian
Science Media Centre

Key images:

Front page - Illustration from
the CDC reveals ultrastructural
morphology exhibited by
coronaviruses

Page 3 - To the COVID testing
Station by Michael Coghlan/Flickr.

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The Year in Review



It has been another extraordinary year on the science news front, with COVID-19 continuing to dominate the headlines throughout 2020-21. There was no time to twiddle our thumbs, bake bread or write poetry as the need for evidence-based information was greater than ever. Our expert reactions and briefings helped inform more than 34,000 news items in Australia and overseas.

Just when we thought we could move on to other important topics at the beginning of 2020, the Delta strain of SARS-CoV-2 hit, generating another massive wave of interest. And along with all the good information came a tsunami of misinformation from a wide range of sources and shared mostly through social media channels.

Partly in response to this, we launched the COVID Vaccine Media Hub in March, a site that brings together research, fact checks, Q&As and comments from experts around the

world, collated by Science Media Centres and others in different countries. Supported by a grant from Google, the hub was hosted by technology not-for-profit, Meedan and involved the input of 10 organisations and translation into 8 languages. It was a massive undertaking and kept the AusSMC busy as the coordinator of the project (see page 5).

While COVID-19 dominated our work, we did manage to keep our Collaborative Journalism project going with support from the Judith Neilson Institute for Journalism and Ideas. Three projects were organised this year – green recovery out of COVID with The Guardian, a series on pain with Nine Digital and Green Zone with the Adelaide Advertiser. It was a wonderful program with lots of interesting benefits beyond simply bringing scientists and journalists together to work on topics of importance to Australia (you can read all about it on page 6).

Finally, like many organisations, we were forced to move some of our traditional face-to-face work online, including our important media training for scientists and science training for journalists (see page 7).

Although we look forward to meeting people again in person, some of our online activities were so successful that we will keep them in an online format in future. There are thankfully some silver linings to an otherwise very challenging year!

Peter Yates AM
Chair

Dr Susannah Elliott
CEO

By the Numbers

OVER

5660

EXPERTS ON THE AUSSMC DATABASE

OVER

34200

MEDIA CLIPS FROM AUSSMC BRIEFINGS AND EXPERT REACTIONS

311

NEW EXPERTS ADDED IN 2020-2021

3829

STORIES PUBLISHED ON SCIMEX

1810

ACTIVE JOURNALISTS REGISTERED WITH THE AUSSMC

428

REQUESTS FOR HELP FROM JOURNALISTS

259

NEW JOURNALIST REGISTRATIONS

121

SETS OF EXPERT REACTIONS DISTRIBUTED TO JOURNALISTS INVOLVING 865 INDIVIDUAL EXPERT COMMENTS

15

NATIONAL MEDIA BRIEFINGS FOR JOURNALISTS INVOLVING 40 EXPERTS

782922

SCIMEX PAGE VIEWS (36.5% INCREASE ON PREVIOUS YEAR)

Latest Developments

Google News Initiative

Following on from the Centre's successful work as part of the COVID-19 Google News Initiative that started in early 2020, Alexios Mantzarlis from the Google News Initiative (GNI) approached us with the idea of combining the efforts of all SMCs to create a global COVID-19 vaccine resource for journalists and fact checkers.

Google allocated US \$1 million for the project and Alexios asked if the AusSMC would lead the initiative. We were also asked to work with technology not-for-profit, Meedan, based in North America.

Apart from the development of Scimex, this is by far the biggest externally funded project we have been tasked with.

This was an exciting offer, especially given the international network of SMCs has for years tried to find ways of collaborating more effectively on global issues and we had all been working extensively on COVID-19.

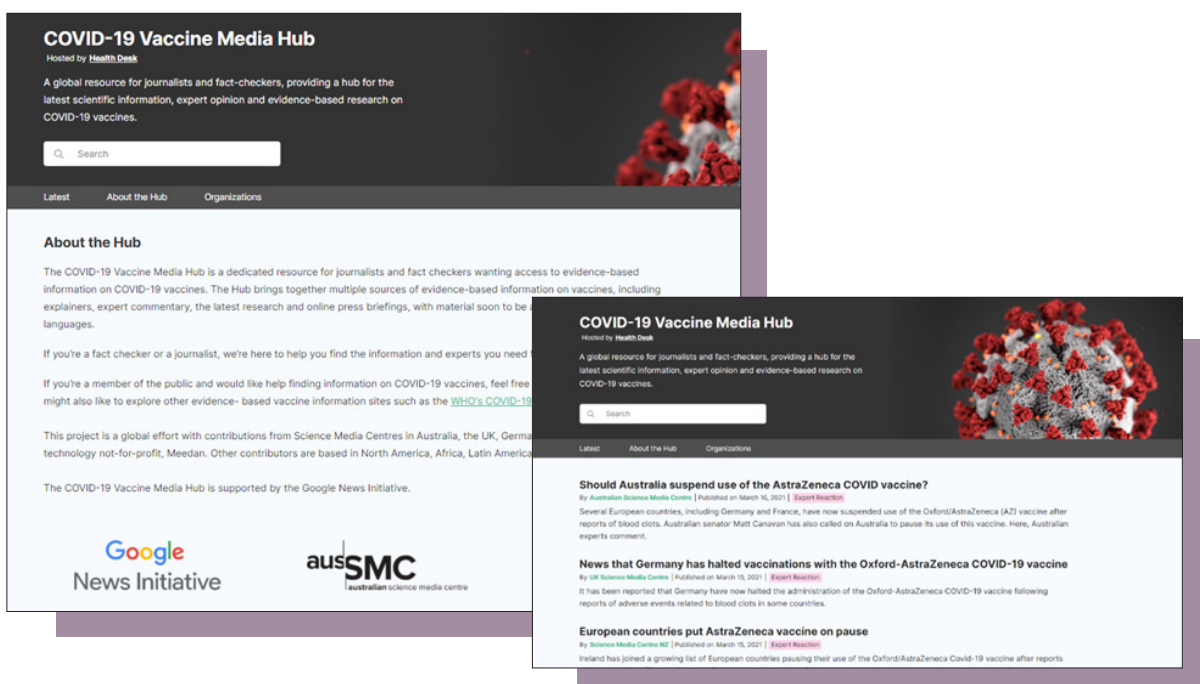
The colossal effort involving seven international organisations and Google culminated in the launch of the [COVID Vaccine Media Hub](#) on 16 March, 2021. After the initial promotion of the hub through media releases and social media, we identified a need to further promote the hub to boost its visibility and accessibility for journalists and fact checkers in countries not represented by SMCs.

From May through June, the Centre executed a range of promotional activities, including a specific global media briefing led by Australia.

To 30 June, 2021, the AusSMC had generated 68 Expert Reactions on COVID-19 and six online media briefings. These resources produced more than 18,300 news items including more than 3,700 overseas news stories, giving local experts global exposure.

Our COVID-19 alert continues to be distributed to over 300 Australian and New Zealand journalists each day.

As at 30 June, 2021, the Vaccine Hub had nine contributing organisations (AusSMC, Meedan, UKSMC, NZSMC, German SMC, SciLine, Canada SMC, African SMC, Taiwan SMC).



LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

Collaborative Journalism Project

Bringing scientists and journalists together to create unique content.

Funded by the Judith Neilson Institute for Journalism and Ideas, the Collaborative Journalism Project aims to deliver expert knowledge and skills into collaborating newsrooms to produce new and exclusive content on topical issues.

Experts are active participants, brainstorming topics and angles with journalists and sometimes even writing content and creating multimedia.

Following on from the successful [Time is Now](#) series with news.com.au in March 2020, we went on to complete the three final series of the Collaborative Journalism Project in 2020-21.

[The second series](#) with *The Guardian* focused on green recovery out of COVID-19. Together with experts recommended by the AusSMC, *The Guardian* created a series of six

videos. The first of the series was published on 23 July, 2020 and the last in the series was published on 17 September, 2020.

Each video was embedded within longer feature articles and was presented as a 3-4 minute explainer. For this project we collated a pool of about 65 experts, although *The Guardian* was only able to use one expert per video.

Our third project explored the topic of pain in a series of videos and articles for Nine. It involved five experts and five case studies (people with lived experience) working with two journalists, a graphic designer, and the editor on five comprehensive pain topics: [migraines](#), [chronic pain](#), [back pain](#), [endometriosis](#), and [sleep pain](#).

The series launched on 11 April, 2021 with the final topic covered on 9 May, 2021. The audience numbers were huge; combined, these articles were seen more than half a million times.

The fourth and final project in the series started in May 2021 with *The Advertiser* and focused on wildlife and

habitat in South Australia.

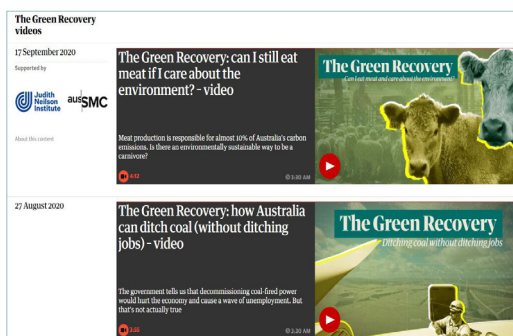
With at least seven scientists and other experts working with four journalists and the editor of *The Advertiser*, it was by far the most complex of the four projects.

By the time it was launched on 4 June, it was a massive undertaking involving multiple organisations including News Corp, AusSMC, Green Adelaide, the Environment Institute (University of Adelaide), the Botanic Gardens, the University of South Australia, Flinders University, and the Science Teachers Association.

It coincided with Green Adelaide's pitch to the National Park City Foundation to become the second National Park City in the world. [The Green Zone Campaign](#) became the umbrella for the Collaborative Journalism Project and encompassed a broad spectrum of environmental issues. The campaign aimed to engage the community in "re-wilding" Adelaide, making the city cooler, greener, wilder, and more climate resilient.




AusSMC CEO Dr Susannah Elliott (centre), Professor Chris Daniels, presiding member/chair, Green Adelaide Landscape Board (left), and University of Adelaide Environment Institute director Professor Robert Hill (right).



NEWS • CORONAVIRUS •

'Rona rockstars: The STEM celebrities Australians love to follow




Samantha Dick
Reporter

ASH BARTY? Never heard of her.
DUSTIN MARTIN? Doesn't ring any bells.
RAINA MACINTYRE? Now we're talking.

As the coronavirus pandemic ground our lives to a halt, new Australian celebrities have dominated our TV screens, newspapers and radios.

And they aren't sports stars, actors or big-name chefs. The year 2020 is all about celebrating our scientists.

As part of a joint project from the Australian Science Media Centre and Stream media monitoring, researchers ranked the people who have featured most prominently in coverage of COVID-19.



Professor Raina MacIntyre, Picture UNSW

SHARE

- TWITTER
- FACEBOOK
- REDDIT
- PINTEREST
- EMAIL

Women in STEM

The AusSMC participated in the selection process for the next cohort of the Superstars of STEM program. We provided feedback on application videos in September 2020, ahead of the announcements in December.

We have continued to work on Women in STEM training with Science and Technology Australia and their Superstars of STEM program. As with all our training, we have had to find ways to adapt in-person training to an online format, which has been working remarkably well. Online media training is set to occur in October.

The AusSMC also tracked the media impact of the previous cohort of Superstars.

Stream Monitoring Project

Aside from the expected names like Prime Minister Scott Morrison and State leaders like Premier Gladys Berejiklian, lesser-known academics have been stepping up and into the spotlight when it comes to COVID-19 coverage.

As part of a joint project with Stream media monitoring, we ranked the experts who have featured most prominently in coverage of COVID-19.

The project highlighted researchers such as Professor Raina MacIntyre from the University of New South Wales (pictured above) along with academics from Australian National University, the University of Queensland, and the University of Melbourne.

Indigenous Media Mentoring Program

Ahead of the 2021 program we produced a [promotional video](#) and began to recruit a new cohort in November 2020.

With 11 participants selected we had planned for the fourth IMMP to go ahead at the SBS/NITV Sydney studios in April 2021, but as with so many other things, our plans were

scuppered by the pandemic.

The training has been delayed until 30 September - 1 October with plans to hold an additional online training session ahead of the two-day workshop attended by Indigenous mentors. The two-day workshop will also provide practice interviews and networking opportunities with radio and TV journalists.

Long-term supporters of the program, Professor Lisa Jackson

Pulver and Rae Johnston will continue in their roles as mentors with the addition of Professor James Ward to the mentoring team.

NITV-SBS have confirmed their commitment to collaborate on the program again, and CSL will also support the 2021 program.

Media Snapshots

Expert Reactions and Media Briefings help provide context and independent commentary on breaking news and complex or controversial research. Our media team organised 15 Media Briefings and sent out 121 sets of Expert Reactions during the year (including two in Q& A style and one explainer). Below is a sample of the stories we triggered or contributed to.

▶ **Should masks become mandatory in Melbourne** - July 2020

As Melbourne entered its second lockdown in early July, questions were being raised about whether masks should be mandatory in public places to help stem the rates of COVID-19, as was the case in a number of countries overseas. Australian experts were largely united on their call for masks in public and just 10 days later, the Victorian Government moved to make them mandatory.

The experts who contributed to our Expert Reaction were quoted in close to 800 news items.



▶ **Neurological consequences of COVID-19: The 'Silent Wave'** - September 2020

The immediate effects of COVID-19 may not be the only health effects all Australia has to deal with as a result of the pandemic, with many of the long-term consequences still unknown. Research underway at the Florey Institute of Neuroscience and Mental Health is examining one potential long-term issue, a link between COVID-19 and increased risk of Parkinson's. The AusSMC and Florey worked together on an embargoed briefing on a review paper to be published on the potential long-term neurological consequences of COVID-19, which they dub the 'silent wave'.

The briefing was accessed by 20 journalists while the Scimex page had a further 132 page views. The briefing generated more than 800 news items with a potential audience reach of 10 million.



▶ **Did Australia’s plain tobacco packaging reduce the number of smokers or lead smokers to smoke more?**

- September 2020

The AusSMC was alerted to new research which suggested that plain packaging for tobacco in Australia may have actually led to smokers smoking more because they switched to cheaper brands.

The paper compared changes between Australia and New Zealand in smoking prevalence, smoking frequency, and expenditure on smoking between 2002 and 2017 to look at whether the introduction of Australia’s plain packaging law in 2012 had greater impact in Australia compared to NZ who did not introduce plain packaging until 2018. However, when independent experts looked at the paper they highlighted a major flaw in the research. Namely, that the researchers did not account for New Zealand implementing major tobacco tax increases at the same time as Australia introduced plain packaging.

One expert commented “This is truly a terrible



paper”, while another said, “This research is fundamentally flawed and incomplete”.

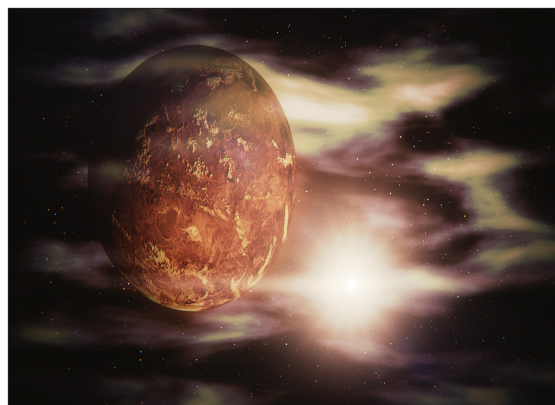
The expert comments influenced the subsequent media coverage and in some cases were even reflected in the headlines.

▶ **Phosphine gas discovery has us wondering - Is there life on...Venus?**

– September 2020

In September, international researchers announced they had discovered a tantalising hint that Venus may harbour life - phosphine gas. The AusSMC was alerted to the story by the James Clerk Maxwell Telescope’s Deputy Director, Dr Jessica Dempsey, an Australian working in Hawaii. She was concerned the researchers would be trolled online - especially as the team was led by a woman. The AusSMC Expert Reaction helped ensure the researchers were not the only voices heard by the media on this story and provided journalists with local experts who could help them understand the significance of the finding.

The researchers also reported that it was a very positive experience and the trolling they feared didn’t eventuate.

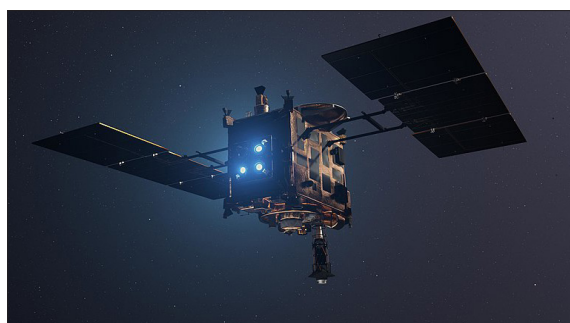


The comments were used in over 1,300 news stories, and around half of these were overseas outlets.

▶ **Hayabusa2 capsule lands on Aussie soil with space rocks on board**

- December 2020

While food delivery services got a good workout in 2020, space nerds around the world eagerly awaited delivery of a different kind of package. Japanese space craft Hayabusa2 returned from its six-year, 5.2 billion kilometre journey to the asteroid Ryugu and landed right here in the Australian desert. The Japanese explorer was carrying the first ever sub-surface asteroid samples - one of only a few extra-terrestrial samples to have ever been brought to Earth. AusSMC’s online briefing brought together four major players in the mission ahead of the Hayabusa2 capsule landing in Woomera on 6 December.



The briefing speakers went on to contribute to over 1,300 news stories, reaching an audience of over 10 million.

▶ **Is the Murray-Darling Basin Plan working? 2020 Evaluation Report**
- December 2020

The Murray-Darling Basin Plan has resulted in some positive outcomes, according to a report released in December at an AusSMC briefing. But with a changing climate, researchers say there is still a long way to go before we can sit back. The report found that since its inception in 2012, the plan has recovered 20 per cent of water used by farmers, representing 2,100 gigalitres of water saved for the benefit of the environment.

The AusSMC also conducted an Expert Reaction on the report to gather independent expert comments alongside the briefing launch. Both these activities contributed to more than 500 news items.



▶ **Scientists call for pause to AstraZeneca vaccine rollout**
- January 2021

In January, *The Age* reported that the Australian and New Zealand Society for Immunology had called on the Federal Government to immediately pause the planned rollout of the AstraZeneca vaccine because it may not be effective enough to generate herd immunity.

The AusSMC sought expert comment following the calls to help clarify the issues around vaccine effectiveness and herd immunity. After coming under tremendous pressure, the Society for Immunology reversed its position the next day.

The question was essentially about strategy – given our low number of cases and deaths, should Australia wait for what initially looked like a more effective vaccine, or use whatever vaccine we could get to prevent severe illness and death?

What this debate really highlighted was the lack of communication with both the public and experts about the rationale underlying Australia’s vaccine strategy.



▶ **Australia’s top scientists urge government to speed up net zero drive**
– March 2021

In March the AusSMC helped launch a new report from the Australian Academy of Science which painted a grim picture of how Australia would look in a 3°C warmer world.

The report also called on the government to accelerate Australia’s transition to net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The briefing helped generate 289 news items related to the report.



▶ **Answering your questions on the AstraZeneca vaccine**
– March 2021

Just as the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine started making headlines around the world for a potential link to blood clots, Australia began rolling out the vaccine across the country. The AusSMC organised a background briefing to bring together experts from AstraZeneca, along with an independent clinician-scientist, to answer journalists' questions. The briefing also coincided with the announcement that locally-produced vaccines had been approved by the TGA. A total of 21 journalists tuned in to or downloaded the briefing, and it generated 195 pieces of media coverage.



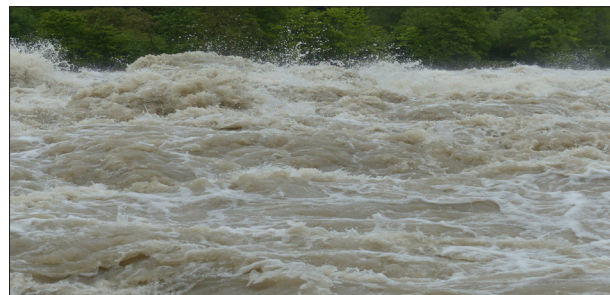
▶ **AstraZeneca vaccine blood clots**
- March-June 2021

As the issue of blood clots evolved, the AusSMC issued multiple Expert Reactions covering everything from the initial detection, to the changes to Australia's vaccine rollout. The comments came from haematologists along with epidemiologists, communications and behaviour experts, and vaccine and infectious diseases experts. The Expert Reactions have informed more than 1,200 news items.



▶ **Sydney and NSW floods**
- March 2021

In March, authorities issued evacuation warnings as many areas in NSW reached dangerous levels of flooding. The floods in the Hawkesbury – Nepean Valley highlighted the contentious proposal by the NSW Government to raise the Warragamba Dam. The AusSMC collected Expert Reactions as the floods unfolded to help journalists report on this breaking news story. The comments and experts we quoted went on to be used in over 800 news items.



▶ **The first COVID-19 case was likely earlier than records show**
- June 2021

In June the journal Scientific Reports published a paper by an Australian researcher suggesting the virus was already adapted to humans when it first emerged. The AusSMC conducted an Expert Reaction on this paper with several experts highlighting that this in itself does not mean the virus was 'man-made'.

A day later the journal PLOS Pathogens also published research on the virus origins.

This paper suggested that 17 November, 2019 was the most likely date of the world's first case of COVID-19. The AusSMC also collected expert comments on this paper.



Collectively the two Expert Reactions contributed to more than 600 news items, including around 300 in overseas outlets.

AusSMC Staff

After joining the team on a short-term contract last financial year, Annika Dean's work on the coronavirus project ended in November 2020.

Former Supporter Relations Officer Steven Mew moved over into the media team in March 2021.

The Centre's newest staff member, Rachel McDonald, joined us from the *Wagga Daily* in April, bringing the media team to five and freeing up some of Lyndal's time to work on the

international COVID-19 Vaccine Media Hub project.

The AusSMC had 8.8 full-time equivalents during 2020-2021.

Staff at the Centre during the year were:

Dr Susannah Elliott, CEO

Lyndal Byford, Director of News & Partnerships

Dr Joseph Milton, Senior Media Officer

Nigel Kerby, Project Manager

Marilyn Arnold, Office Manager

Deb Shaw, Project Officer

Ben Kaldi, Science Information Officer

Olivia Henry, Media Officer

Rachel McDonald, Media Officer

Steven Mew, Media Officer

Annika Dean, Media Officer



Dr Susannah Elliott
Chief Executive Officer



Lyndal Byford
Director of News & Partnerships



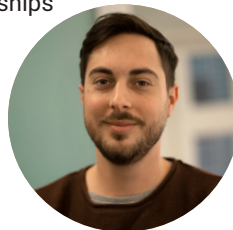
Dr Joseph Milton
Senior Media Officer



Nigel Kerby
Project Manager



Marilyn Arnold
Office Manager



Ben Kaldi
Science Information Officer



Deb Shaw
Project Officer



Olivia Henry
Media Officer



Steven Mew
Media Officer



Annika Dean
Media Officer



Rachel McDonald
Media Officer

AusSMC Staff Activity

Staff were regularly in demand to discuss interesting science stories in the media.

Dr Joseph Milton continued to be the major presenter of AusSMC online training modules for sponsors and affiliated organisations which have proven to be popular. We are also increasingly being asked to provide paid media training by external organisations.

Alongside our introduction to the media and social media workshops, we have also managed to introduce a new training module for researchers on communicating science in contentious areas such as COVID-19 vaccines.

At the end of 2020, the AusSMC released the Top Ten Science stories and Top Ten Weirdest Science Stories,

which continued to be popular with journalists. These stories generated 586 news items reaching an audience of 7.2 million.

In March, the Google News Initiative invited Susannah to present at a training session for journalists on reporting the COVID pandemic in Australia. Topics covered included the rollout of the different vaccines, the progress of the vaccination program, and a look at tools to counteract misinformation and disinformation.

The training session was an opportunity to alert journalists to the recently launched global COVID-19 Vaccine Media Hub (COVIDvaccinehub.org). The event

was live streamed to journalists in the region and was made available for download on YouTube.

Joe, Lyndal and Susannah continued to do fortnightly slots on ABC Darwin and on ABC Radio National's Drive program. Joe and Lyndal have also started a monthly science segment on ABC Nightlife on a Sunday night in which there is a more in-depth discussion on a nominated science topic together with contribution from a science expert.

Joe also ran online trainings for SBS cadet journalists in April 2021.



AusSMC mentions in the Media

The Centre's name appeared in the media dozens of times, including as a source of comment for ABC's Media Watch.

CNN
Hayabusa2 mission confirms return of an asteroid sample, including gas, to Earth
... deputy director general of the department of solar system sciences at JAXA, during an online briefing hosted by the **Australian Science Media Centre**
15 Dec 2020

Cosmos Magazine
Year of extremes
"We know that Australia is affected by climate change," explains Lynette Bettio, senior climatologist at the Bureau of Meteorology in an **AusSMC** briefing.
8 Jan 2021

The Washington Post What to Know About Vaccine-Linked Deaths, Allergies - The ...
Analysis | What to Know About Vaccine-Linked Deaths, Allergies
... a lecturer in the School of Public Health and Community Medicine at the University of New South Wales, told the **Australian Science Media Centre**
23 Jan 2021

New Straits Times
Covid-19 vaccine allergies, deaths: What we know
... a lecturer in the School of Public Health and Community Medicine at the University of New South Wales, told the **Australian Science Media Centre**
18 Jan 2021

Spektrum der Wissenschaft
Laborunfall als Ursprung des Coronavirus unwahrscheinlich
... von Tieren stammt, sagte etwa Nikolai Petrovsky, ein Immunologe an der Flinders University in Adelaide, gegenüber dem **Australian Science Media Centre**.
11 Feb 2021

Observador
Especialistas australianos defendem que se adie uso da ...
... professor de Epidemiologia na Universidade de Nova Gales do Sul, ao **AusSMC**. "Se usarmos a vacina da Oxford/AstraZeneca será preciso uma cobertura maior...."
13 Jan 2021

SBS
Strange science: the weirdest and most wonderful stories of ...
Weird areas. In fact, 2020 produced an absolute bumper crop of bizarre science yarns. Thanks to the **Australian Science Media Centre** we now know - officially and...
14 Dec 2020

News.com.au
Volcano hell: Mystery stranger hailed
"White Island has been a disaster waiting to happen for many years," he told the **Australian Science Media Centre**. "Having visited it twice, I have always...
10 Dec 2020

Sputnik Brasil
Descobertos na Austrália tubarões que andam debaixo d'água (VÍDEO)
Au Science Media Ctr (@**AusSMC**) January 21, 2020. Espécies de tubarões andantes foram descobertas nos trópicos, revela Universidade de Queensland.
21 Jan 2020

Nature
COVID origin search must continue after WHO report, say ...
Scientists say that the hunt for the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic must continue, ... University in Adelaide, told the **Australian Science Media Centre**.
10 Feb 2021

The Hill
Fauci warns US needs to 'hunker down' for fall, winter: 'It's not going to be easy' | TheHill
"On April 17 the **Australian Science Media Centre** asked four Australian virologists: "Did COVID-19 come from a lab in Wuhan?"
10 Sept 2020

9News
'I don't really want to live like this': Police officer in intense pain told there was nothing wrong
This article is part of a collaborative Journalism project with the **Australian Science Media Centre** and Judith Neilson Institute. Continue reading.
18 Apr 2021

In October, the ABC's Media Watch asked the AusSMC to comment on a Sky News broadcast that claimed the medical authorities in Australia who have banned hydroxychloroquine could be responsible for hundreds of deaths as there is now 'proof' that it saves lives if given as an early COVID-19 treatment.

The claims were largely based on a systematic review preprint and Media Watch asked the AusSMC to give

a verdict on the value of the study, especially as the conclusions were at odds with those of the WHO, USFDA, US CDC and Australian medical authorities.

We highlighted some issues that can arise with systematic reviews and put Media Watch in touch with experts on evidence-based medicine and those trialling hydroxychloroquine here in Australia who went on to be quoted by the program.

MEDIA WATCH

Mailbox 2 Oct 2020

Lyndal Byford
Australian Science Media Centre

The phrase "garbage in, garbage out" means that if a review includes low-quality studies, the results will reflect that and are likely to be biased and unreliable.

AusSMC Board

The Board is chaired by Peter Yates AM and meets four times a year. Deputy chairs are Robyn Williams from the ABC and Professor Merlin Crossley from the University of New South Wales. At 30 June, board members included:

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

Dr Amanda Caples Lead Scientist, Victorian Government

Jim Carroll Private consultant

Professor Caroline McMillen Chief Scientist for South Australia

Professor Merlin Crossley Deputy Vice Chancellor, Academic, The University of New South Wales

Professor Aleks Owczarek Dean of the Faculty of Science, The University of Melbourne

Professor Graham Durant AM Director, Questacon

Jeremy Houghton Head of Strategy & Corporate Affairs, AIA Australia

Dr Michael Ellies Non-Executive Director

Alexander Needs Partnership and Strategy Director, Nine Entertainment Co.

Melvin Mansell State Editorial Director, SA, WA, NT & TAS, News Corp Australia

Professor Melissa Brown Executive Dean, Faculty of Science, The University of Queensland

Professor Robert Saint Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), Flinders University

Robyn Williams Presenter, Science Show, ABC

The Hon Steven Marshall MP Premier of South Australia

Tanya Bowes Director of Corporate Affairs, CSIRO

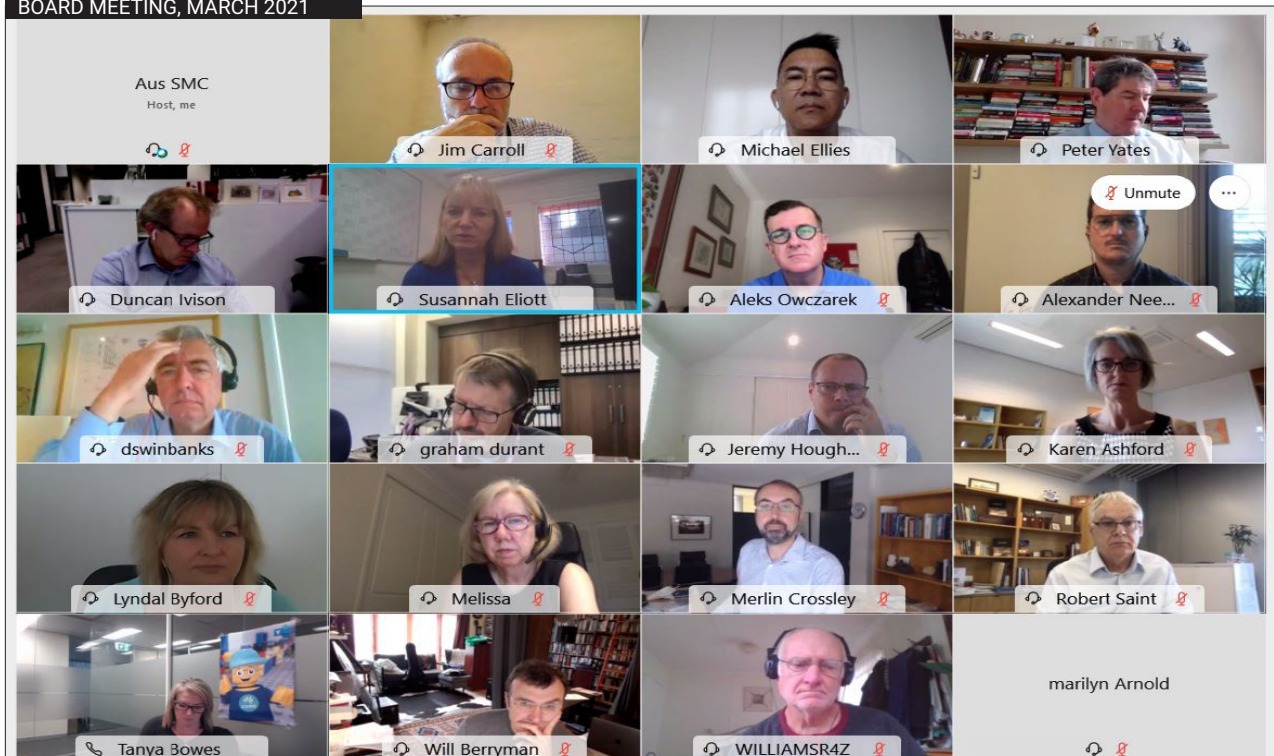
Professor Chris Moran Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research, Curtin University

David Swinbanks Chairman, Springer Nature, Australia and New Zealand

Professor Duncan Ivison Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research), The University of Sydney

Will Berryman Executive Director/ Council Member, The Royal Institution of Australia (RiAus)

BOARD MEETING, MARCH 2021



List of Media Briefings and Expert Reactions

The following is a full list of the Media Briefings ([blue](#)) and Expert Reactions the Australian Science Media Centre organised over the past year. Collectively, they generated over 34,200 media hits in Australia and overseas.

▶ June 2021

- AstraZeneca or Pfizer? Australia's COVID jab confusion
 - mRNA COVID-19 vaccines may be linked to inflammation of the heart muscle
 - The first COVID-19 case was likely earlier than records show
 - COVID-19 origins - Virus binds best to human receptor
 - Climate tipping points described in leaked IPCC Report
 - UNESCO declares the GBR should be listed as 'in danger'
 - Getting Pfizer after AstraZeneca may result in better immune protection (preprint)
 - Can mRNA from COVID-19 vaccines be integrated into the human DNA?
 - AstraZeneca vaccine recommended for over-60s only
 - Second Australian death from blood clots following AstraZeneca vaccine
 - Delta COVID-19 variant detected in Melbourne
 - What do we know about Victoria's COVID-19 variant?
 - Mission to find Australia's unfound species could bring big economic benefits
-

▶ May 2021

- Victoria announces 7-day circuit breaker lockdown to combat highly infectious variant of concern
- New international guidelines relax '14 day rule' that limits research on human embryos
- Indian COVID-19 variant in Melbourne
- Richest nations agree to end support for coal production overseas
- [Getting your head around mRNA vaccines](#)
- Tackling the NSW mouse plague
- Moderna to supply Australia with 25m doses of COVID-19 vaccine
- Federal Budget 2021/22
- Was the severity of the black summer bushfires due to forest management?
- Five more clotting cases likely linked to AstraZeneca vaccine
- NSW mystery COVID-19 case

▶ April 2021

- US Climate Summit 2021
- EXPERT Q&A: What is vaccine-induced thrombosis and thrombocytopenia (VITT)?
- Brain blood clots may be more likely after COVID-19 infection than following vaccines
- Human-monkey hybrid embryos may help scientists understand human biology and disease
- Fukushima water release
- Blood clot safety advice changes Aussie COVID-19 vaccine plans
- Carbon dioxide at record levels
- Blood clots declared a very rare side effect of AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine

▶ March 2021

- [Australia's top scientists urge government to speed up net zero drive](#)
- AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine efficacy questioned
- [Answering your questions on the AstraZeneca vaccine](#)
- Sydney and NSW Floods
- The Black Summer bushfires drove record-breaking aerosol levels
- Aussie-led team generates model of early human embryos from skin cells
- Should Australia suspend use of the AstraZeneca COVID vaccine?
- AstraZeneca vaccine suspended in Denmark, Norway and Iceland on clot concern
- NZ earthquake and tsunami warning
- COVID-19 caused a 7% emissions drop, but how do we keep it going?
- Petition to the Governor of NSW for pardon of Kathleen Folbigg

▶ February 2021

- [ARPANSA launches new Australian radio wave safety standard to reflect latest research and technology, including 5G](#)
- Vaccine program kicks off in Australia
- Seven Minutes of Terror – NASA's Perseverance rover lands on Mars
- First black hole ever detected is more massive than we thought
- Facebook's news site ban
- TGA approves AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine for Australia
- [Made in Australia - COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing explained](#)
- WHO Interim report recommends AstraZeneca vaccine
- WHO releases report on COVID-19 origin
- Achieving net zero emissions by 2050
- How COVID-19 vaccines are handling the new variants
- National approach to hotel quarantine
- Bushfires across the Perth Hills
- SPUTNIK vaccine shows 91.6per cent efficacy

▶ January 2021

- Novavax vaccine shows 89.3 per cent efficacy in phase 3 trial
- AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine in older adults
- TGA approves Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine

BRIEFINGS AND EXPERT REACTIONS

- Expert Q&A: Answering your questions about COVID-19 variants
- Should we pause the 5G roll out until safety is confirmed?
- Death of elderly Norwegians after Pfizer vaccine
- Scientists call for pause to AstraZeneca vaccine rollout
- World-first study shows increased atmospheric CO2 levels damage young lungs, in mice
- Has there been a global insect apocalypse?
- [BOM Annual Climate Statement 2020 - Australia's 4th warmest year on record](#)
- Aussie COVID vaccine rollout brought forward to February

▶ December 2020

- Is the Murray-Darling Basin Plan working? 2020 Evaluation Report
- [Is the Murray-Darling Basin Plan working? 2020 Evaluation Report](#)
- UQ COVID vaccine abandoned after HIV antibody positives
- Global Carbon Budget - unprecedented emissions slowdown thanks to COVID
- NHMRC Alcohol Guidelines - No more than 10-a-week and 4-a-day
- Hayabusa2 capsule full of space-rocks successfully lands in the outback
- [Hayabusa 2 capsule set to land on Aussie soil with space rocks on board](#)
- Aussies likely to start COVID vaccinations in March after UK approves Pfizer-BioTech vaccine
- WMO REPORT - 2020 looks set to be one of the warmest years on record
- Moderna vaccine reports 100% efficacy against severe COVID-19

▶ November 2020

- Emergency department visits surged during 2019-20 black summer bushfires
- Phase 3 update on the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine
- Does Adelaide have a "super-strain" of COVID-19?
- South Australia to begin 6-day "circuit breaker" lockdown
- [What is stopping us winning the war on waste? ATSE report](#)
- Preliminary results from University of Queensland's phase I COVID-19 vaccine trial
- [State of the Climate BOM/CSIRO report - More big weather is coming](#)
- Pfizer announces COVID-19 vaccine is 90% effective
- The US formally withdraws from the Paris Agreement
- Australia secures two new potential coronavirus vaccines
- [Australia's current biosecurity not enough to meet growing threats - CSIRO report](#)

▶ October 2020

- Black Summer Bushfire Royal Commission Final Report
- Water on the moon! And it could help us head out to space
- Victoria reports case of COVID-19 reinfection
- NASA's OSIRIS-Rex digs for dirt on asteroid Bennu
- Is arthritis drug tocilizumab another treatment for COVID-19?
- Babies exposed to huge amounts of microplastics from their bottles
- WHO COVID-19 trial finds remdesivir, hydroxychloroquine, lopinavir, and interferon don't save lives
- No evidence of excess deaths in NZ and Australia due to pandemic
- Johnson & Johnson pauses COVID-19 vaccine trial

- Trial finds hydroxychloroquine doesn't stop people dying from COVID-19
- Cancer screening down amid COVID-19 pandemic
- Federal Budget 2020-21
- Trump returns to the White House + US review recommends remdesivir to treat COVID-19

▶ **September 2020**

- NSW coal seam gas project and QLD coalmine approved
- The reason some people develop life-threatening COVID-19 may have been found
- E-cigarettes to be available on prescription
- [Neurological consequences of COVID-19 - The Silent Wave](#)
- The unprecedented health costs of Australia's last bushfire season
- Did Australia's plain tobacco packaging reduce the number of smokers, or lead them to smoke more?
- Washing clothes creates more microplastic pollution on land than in water
- Phosphine gas discovery has us wondering - Is there life on Venus?
- Pause of AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine trial
- Climate change has not stopped for COVID-19
- [New drug improves bone growth in kids with the most common form of dwarfism](#)
- Analysis finds steroids help treat critically ill COVID-19 patients
- Asphalt during summer may be worse for pollution than petrol and diesel combined

▶ **August 2020**

- EXPLAINER: Vaccine clinical trial phases
- First reported case of COVID-19 reinfection
- Caffeine during pregnancy may not be a good idea
- Trump announces emergency authorisation of convalescent plasma for COVID-19
- [Genomic testing for COVID-19 - ask the experts](#)
- Exposure to high levels of BPAs may be linked to death
- Expert Q&A - Victoria records largest number of deaths to date alongside 282 new cases
- Australia needs a national bushfire monitoring agency
- Russia approves COVID-19 vaccine
- Massive explosion rocks Lebanon's capital Beirut

▶ **July 2020**

- South Australian vaccine trial clears phase 1
- Victoria records 723 new COVID-19 cases
- A step towards a blood test for Alzheimer's
- Two COVID vaccine trials show early success
- [How is COVID-19 impacting Australia's flu season?](#)
- Aussie smoking rate falls, alcohol consumption stable, but use of some illicit drugs is up
- COVID-19-causing virus unlikely to come just from bat virus
- Should masks become mandatory in Melbourne?
- Melbourne returns to stage 3 restrictions
- Was COVID-19 in Europe in March 2019?
- US buys almost all global stock of COVID-19 drug remdesivir

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Financials

Income	2021 (\$)	2020 (\$)
Sponsorship received	725,235	855,128
Google COVID-19 Vaccination Hub	1,263,592	-
Scimex	30,580	23,000
Indigenous Media Mentoring	-	30,000
Google Project	-	73,014
JN Institute	-	49,840
Affiliation	166,333	155,100
Cost recovery	21,175	18,115
Subscriptions and uploads	17,130	19,140
Other income	37,500	77,084
Interest received	485	6,685
Foreign currency exchange gain	20,358	-

Total Income	2021 (\$)	2020 (\$)
	2,282,388	1,307,106

Expenditure	2021 (\$)	2020 (\$)
Salaries and wages	849,071	746,717
Indigenous media mentoring	4,467	16,061
Google Project	15,495	9,045
JN Institute	12,041	8,235
Scimex	76,048	102,301
Media team/briefings	11,005	10,663
Office expenses	94,023	89,409
Board meeting expenses	-	3,194
Depreciation	2,266	3,280
Travel expenses	2,535	20,278
Marketing and development costs	212	8,078
Other expenses	12,168	-
Google COVID-19 grant funds expended	1,006,938	-

Total Expenditure	2021 (\$)	2020 (\$)
	2,086,269	1,017,261

	2021 (\$)	2020 (\$)
Surplus	196,119	289,845
Other comprehensive income	-	-
Total comprehensive surplus for the year	196,119	289,845
Retained surplus at the beginning of the financial year	918,501	387,858
Adoption of AASB 15 and AASB 1058	-	240,798
Retained surplus at the end of the financial year	1,114,620	918,501



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