

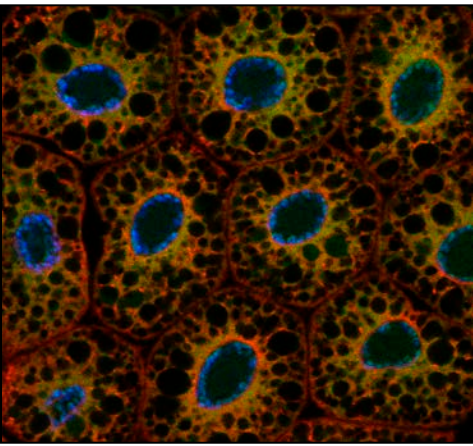


ausSMC
| **australian science media centre**

ANNUAL REVIEW

1 JULY 2014 TO 30 JUNE 2015

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Australian Science Media Centre Inc.
Annual Review 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015

Produced by: The Australian Science Media Centre
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THE YEAR IN REVIEW

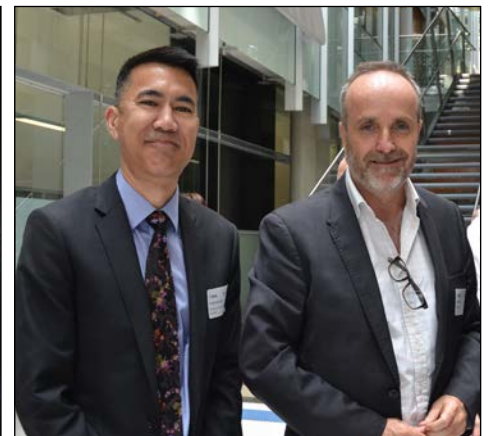
The undisputed highlight for 2014-15 was the much anticipated launch of the Science Media Exchange (Scimex.org), the AusSMC's hub of breaking science news, multimedia, events and expertise. It is the first of its kind in the region, designed to bring more Australian and New Zealand research to the public by connecting journalists with new research and expertise.

The creation of Scimex.org involved a massive commitment of time and resources and was a collaborative effort involving the Australian and New Zealand Science Media Centres and a lot of input from journalists, scientists and research institutes. The project was supported by Inspiring Australia with significant in-kind support from Squiz and both Science Media Centres.

Alongside our work on Scimex, the AusSMC was kept busy reacting to some of the biggest stories of the year – Ebola, 2014 being the warmest year on record, frozen berries with hepatitis A, Cyclones Lam and Marcia, and the catastrophic earthquake in Nepal to name a few. We also informed debate on some complex and contentious issues including the growing use of ICE, the world's first genetic modification of human embryos, climate change, CSG, nuclear power, the WHO's new sugar guidelines, and the NHMRC report on wind turbines and health. More on page 10.

2015 saw the official end of our successful Scientists in Residence program in which we placed 18 scientists into news rooms around the country for up to two weeks each. Media outlets included regional papers such as the Bendigo Advertiser and the Ballarat Courier; metropolitan outlets such as the SMH, The Age, The Daily Telegraph and The Courier Mail; and national outlets such as SBS, ABC and Mamamia. The program was embraced so enthusiastically by scientists and media outlets that we decided to keep it going on a smaller scale, with new residencies planned for 2015-16.

All these activities were made possible through the support of the amazing organisations that fund the Australian Science Media Centre, our board, patron and AusSMC staff. Please take a look at them on pages 13-16!



BY THE NUMBERS

4,000
Australian
experts on the
SMC database

515 new
experts
joined up in
2014-15

1,333 journalists
registered with the
SMC

247 new
journalist
registrations

35 national
media briefings
for journalists

2,600
enquiries
from the media

Approx.
2,000 stories
floated to the
media via
SMC Picks

Involving
86
experts

Over **13,000**
media clips
tracked to SMC
briefings and
reactions

69 sets of
expert
reactions
distributed
to journalists

Involving
194
experts

38,421 visits to
smc.org.au

reaching
~ **8 million**
per month

12,345
Scimex visits

(In the first four
months)

Over 4,500
twitter
followers

(as of 30 June 2015)

973
Facebook
likes

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

SCIMEX

During 2014-15 the main focus was finalising the website for launch. During the year, the Centre worked on final design and operational aspects before inviting a number of key journalists, media officers and experts to trial Scimex. The soft launch coincided with the Centre's November 2014 board meeting at Bio21 in Melbourne. The official public launch of Scimex was held at Flinders University in Adelaide in March 2015 and was attended by the then State Minister for Science, Gail Gago.

The initial soft launch of Scimex at Bio21 in Melbourne in November 2014 was a wonderful event, accentuated by a stimulating panel discussion on the future of the media with Robyn Williams (ABC), Susan Greenfield (Oxford University), Alan Finkel (Vice Chancellor at Monash University), Jim Carroll (SBS) and John-Paul Syriatowicz (Squiz). The site launched with more than 500 active journalist users and 40 institutions and spun out 850 stories in its first four months.

The project is a major initiative for the Centre and is being developed in collaboration with the New Zealand Science Media Centre. The creation of Scimex was supported with grants from Inspiring Australia and the Myer Foundation together with significant in-kind support from web development company, Squiz and from the Australian and NZ Science Media Centres restructuring to make the collaboration possible.



SPONSORSHIP AND THE SCIENCE-MEDIA COLLABORATION

Support for the Centre continued to grow as we gained two new sponsors in The University of Technology Sydney and The University of Queensland. Squiz also came on board as an in-kind sponsor. Our science media collaboration also expanded with Griffith University, Murdoch Children's Research Institute, International Centre for Radio Astronomy Research (ICRAR), Telethon Kids Institute, Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS), Australian Institute of Policy and Science, Centre for Quantum Computation and Communication Technology, National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), National Computational Infrastructure (NCI), and Swinburne University joining as affiliates.

SCIENTISTS IN RESIDENCE

After two successful years, the Scientists in Residence program officially ended in June 2015. Over the two years of the program, 18 scientists completed placements in 16 newsrooms, in six states and the Northern Territory. The response from both participating news rooms and scientists has been overwhelmingly positive. During 2014-15, six scientists were placed at The Daily Telegraph, ABC, Mamamia, The Bendigo Advertiser, the Ballarat Courier and SBS/NITV.

The Centre plans to keep the program going at a smaller scale with media partners ABC, SBS, Fairfax and News Corp.

Professor Rob Harcourt from Macquarie University spent several weeks with the Daily Telegraph, helping to produce more than five articles on marine life, visualised with his own stunning underwater photography.

Harbour shark alarm: Acoustic network monitors our migrating marine life

PROFESSOR BOB HARCOURT THE DAILY TELEGRAPH JULY 18, 2014 12:00AM

SHARE       0 COMMENTS  SAVE THIS STORY



A Giant Cuttlefish / Picture: Robert Harcourt
Source: Supplied

Andrew Boomer from the Sydney Institute of Marine Science downloads data from the gates, enters it into a central database and the scientists who tagged her see she's back. But they will see much more — she is not alone.



A Blue Groper / Picture: Robert Harcourt
Source: Supplied

A FEMALE bull shark swims into Sydney Harbour — and scientists know she's there.

The tagged shark has swum through the Sydney Gates, a line of acoustic receivers across the Harbour entrance monitoring more than 100 marine species including turtles, crayfish, octopus and squid, in our local waters.



A Port Jackson shark / Picture: Robert Harcourt
Source: Supplied

The Sydney Gates are part of a network of acoustic data loggers, part of the integrated marine observing system stretching from the Great Barrier Reef and the North-West Shelf of WA right down to the waters off Tasmania. Scientists are tagging animals to find out where they go, what they do and who with.

MEDIA TRAINING

AusSMC media training introduces scientists at various stages of their careers to the mind-set and workings of modern media operations, including advice and exercises on making their own science more attractive for reporters, preparing for media interviews, working with institutional media teams and avoiding potential media pitfalls. CEO Susannah Elliott and members of the media team provided media training for The Science Pathways 2015 conference, The Defence Science and Technology Organisation (DSTO), University of Tasmania's Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies and Antarctic Climate and Ecosystems CRC, ARC Centre of Excellence for Plant Energy Biology, ARC Centre of Excellence for Plant Cell Walls, Macquarie University, UniSA and Edith Cowan University.

INDIGENOUS MEDIA MENTORING PROGRAM

The Centre has developed a program to nurture the communication skills of a group of Indigenous early to mid-career researchers. With funding from the National Australia Bank, the Centre will develop a pilot program in 2016 in collaboration with the Wollotuka Institute at the University of Newcastle. Watch this space!

Professor Lisa Jackson-Pulver, University of New South Wales collaborated with journalist Stan Grant to help produce this episode on Indigenous health practices.



MEDIA SNAPSHOT

We organised 35 media briefings and sent out 69 sets of expert comments throughout the year. Below is a small collection of the stories we launched or contributed to.

HIV stats update- July 2014

In August, UNSW's Kirby Institute approached us to launch their latest surveillance report on HIV in Australia to coincide with The 20th International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2014) in Melbourne. We ran an embargoed briefing featuring three experts to launch the stats alongside two additional experts from the International Indigenous Pre-conference who presented statistics for Australia's Indigenous communities. The briefing generated 283 media hits including SBS World News, The Age and Weekend Australian.



SBS World News

The roots of sex- October 2014

Flinders University engaged the services of the Centre to highlight new research that identified the origins of sexual intercourse – a discovery that meant sex began much earlier in evolutionary history than first thought. We held an embargoed briefing in the boardroom of the Science Exchange where the lead author Professor John Long had the opportunity to present his findings to journalists both in the room and online. The briefing generated 879 media hits including The Age, The Australian, Daily Telegraph and SBS World News Australia.



SBS World News

Have we f*#%ed the planet? - January 2015

A Swedish science communicator alerted us to Australian-led research and we decided, due to the complicated nature of the paper, journalists would benefit from hearing directly from the Australian researcher himself. On the morning the paper was published, Professor Will Steffen, lead author of the research, spoke to journalists on an online briefing explaining the paper and its findings. The briefing generated 771 media hits including The Age, Reuters, The Telegraph (UK) and New Zealand Herald.



Illawarra Mercury

The science behind ice - April 2015

In the early months of 2015 we noticed an increase in the media coverage of the drug crystal methamphetamine, or ice. Issues reported included increases in violence, especially in hospitals, and increased drug use spreading across rural Australia. Not long after the Federal Government announced a national taskforce to tackle the scourge of ice use, we brought together three experts in the fields of addiction and emergency medicine. The briefing generated 287 media hits including the Fairfax Rural Press network, Agence France Presse and The Advertiser.



The Advertiser

Fireball over Australia - July 2014

On the evening of Thursday July 10 a large fireball was seen shooting through the sky over parts of Eastern Australia. Later reports indicated it was a piece of a Russian Soyuz rocket stage that launched a satellite earlier in the week. We collected a comment from a Melbourne-based astronomer and distributed it to journalists first thing the following morning. The expert reaction generated 221 media hits including The Sydney Morning Herald and Yahoo!7 News.



Business Insider

Increased Alzheimer's risk - September 2014

A French and Canadian study released in September reported that taking benzodiazepines - widely prescribed drugs to treat anxiety and insomnia - was associated with an increased risk of developing Alzheimer's disease. We released an independent comment from an Australian expert and distributed it to journalists under embargo, alongside comments collected by the UK SMC. This expert reaction generated 195 media hits including The Nine Network, AAP, Yahoo! New Zealand and The Advertiser.



The Nine Network

Third warmest year - January 2015

At the beginning of the year the Bureau of Meteorology confirmed 2014 had been Australia's third hottest year on record and that seven of Australia's ten warmest years had occurred in the 13 years since 2002. Shortly after the announcement we released three expert comments to journalists reacting to the Bureau's news. The reaction generated 252 media hits including Channel 7 Sydney, Australian Financial Review and the Times UK.



Channel 7 Sydney

Are sugar and carbs behind obesity?— April 2015

In late April, three international scientists claimed sugar and carbohydrates, and not a lack of exercise, were to blame for the global surge in obesity. We collected comments from a number of nutritional experts across the country to see if the claims stacked up. The expert reaction generated 44 media hits including The West Australian, The Courier-Mail, The New Zealand Herald and ABC Lateline.



ABC (Lateline)



LIST OF MEDIA BRIEFINGS AND EXPERT REACTIONS

The following is a full list of the media briefings (**blue**) and expert reactions the Science Media Centre organised over the past year. The title in brackets shows the scientific journal the study was published in. Collectively they generated over 13,000 media hits in Australia and overseas.

JULY 2014

Nature retracts papers claiming to make stem cells with acid
No blood clot risk with HPV vaccine
Fireball over Australia as piece of Russian rocket re-enters atmosphere
Southern Australian drying likely our fault (Nature Geosciences*)
Organic food higher in antioxidants and lower in toxic metals (Brit Journ of Nutrition*)
[HIV Update – the latest Australian stats from UNSW’s Kirby Institute](#)
[Is any lead too much lead? Release of the NHMRC draft review on lead exposure](#)
Carbon tax repealed
PIN codes to replace credit card signatures
Future foods: improving our diet at the source
Space oddities: advances in Australian space research
Australian scientists clear the AIDS virus in two men

AUG 2014

Experimental drug for Ebola (Nature*)
WHO report criticises e-cigarettes
Antidepressants during pregnancy may be linked to ADHD in kids (Molecular Psychiatry*)
Earthquake in California
[Stem cells: the potential, the reality and the scams](#)
Ineffective superbug control in hospitals (The Lancet*)
[Rewriting ancient history: the origins of Egyptian mummies \(PLOS ONE\)](#)
PSA testing risks and benefits (The Lancet*)
Ebola: is Australia next?

SEPT 2014

Carbon still climbing – release of the Global Carbon Budget for 2014
Latest stats from UNSW’s Kirby Institute
Suspected Ebola case in Australia
Sleeping pills increase Alzheimer’s risk (The BMJ*)
[Taking their lives away – teen cannabis use \(The Lancet Psychiatry*\)](#)
Federal Court of Australia rules breast cancer genes can be patented

OCT 2014

Unconventional gas extraction and air pollution (Environmental health*)
Government strikes deal for climate change policy
Ebola – science vs. panic (Nature*)
High milk intake increases risk of death (The BMJ*)
Man walks again after stem cell treatment cures spinal injury (Cell Transplantation*)
Are shopping receipts a source of BPA? (PLOS ONE*)
[The roots of sex – world’s first lovers did it sideways \(Nature*\)](#)
Lockheed Martin announces nuclear fusion power breakthrough
Government’s Industry Innovation and Competitiveness Agenda announcement
Have we overestimated the amount of CO2 in our atmosphere? (PNAS*)
Lego ends partnership with Shell
‘Milan’ baby ‘cleared’ of HIV relapses (The Lancet*)
Regular drinking may damage sperm (BMJ Open*)
First imported case of Ebola in the US

NOV 2014

[Ebola, bees and wheat disease - Launch of CSIRO report Australia's Biosecurity Future](#)
[Common antimicrobial triclosan boosts liver tumour growth in mice \(PNAS*\)](#)
[Rosetta mission reaches critical stage](#)
[How ZMab fights Ebola \(Scientific Reports*\)](#)

DEC 2014

[The 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, ten years on...](#)
[Top 10 weird and wonderful stories 2014](#)
[Scientists call for use of nuclear to stop biodiversity loss \(Conservation Biology* plus Open Letter\)](#)
[Going nuclear to save the environment](#)
[Findings of the 2014 UNFCCC COP20 meeting in Peru](#)
[Unpasteurised cosmetic milk product implicated in child's death](#)
[Bad media releases to blame for media's exaggerated reporting of health findings \(The BMJ*\)](#)
[Top 10 science stories 2014](#)
[Earthquake hits Melbourne](#)
[Mediterranean diet linked to longer life \(The BMJ*\)](#)

JAN 2015

[Organic pollutants linked to early menopause \(PLOS ONE*\)](#)
[Hormone contraceptive linked to brain tumours in women \(British Journal of Clinical Pharmacology*\)](#)
[Fish oil products fail on freshness \(Scientific Reports*\)](#)
[Have we f*#%ed the planet yet? \(Science & Anthropocene Review\)](#)
[Two men die after suspected synthetic cannabis poisoning](#)
[BPA-replacement chemical BPS makes zebrafish hyperactive \(PNAS*\)](#)
[Bureau confirms 2014 as third warmest year on record](#)

FEB 2015

[Gold and white \(or is it blue and black?\) dress conundrum](#)
[Cyclone Lam and Cyclone Marcia](#)
[Tsunami advisory issued for Iwate Prefecture following 6.9 magnitude earthquake off coast of Japan](#)
[Frozen berries contaminated with hepatitis A](#)
[Academy throws its weight behind climate science](#)
[Past, present and future of bushfires and disasters](#)
[Health impacts of wind farms – release of NHMRC statement](#)
[UK MPs vote to allow mitochondrial DNA transfer, labelled 'three-person IVF' by the press](#)
[The science behind the death penalty](#)

MARCH 2015

[Climate change to wake sleeping dragons \(Nature*\)](#)
[10 years on, no-take marine reserves in the Great Barrier Reef are working](#)
[Soil bacteria play a role in wine quality \(mBio\)*](#)
[Exercise and vitamin D doesn't reduce number of falls in older ladies \(JAMA Internal Medicine\)](#)
[World Heritage Sites risk collapse without local management \(Science\)*](#)
[NHMRC releases its Statement on Homeopathy](#)
[WHO releases sugar guidelines](#)

APRIL 2015

[Tiny bat-like dinosaur discovered \(Nature\)*](#)
[The unhealthy side of climate change – Launch of Australian Academy of Science Report](#)
[Nepalese earthquake](#)
[World's first genetic modification of human embryos reported \(Protein & Cell\)*](#)
[Warming 'slowdown' no cause for carbon complacency \(Nature Climate Change*\)](#)
[Are sugar and carbohydrates behind the current surge in obesity? \(British Journal of Sports Medicine*\)](#)
[UK expert questions link between serotonin and depression \(The BMJ\)*](#)
[The science behind crystal methamphetamine \(ice\)](#)

MAY 2015

New study shows sharks are not so primitive after all (PLOS ONE)*
Get in quick: clinical trial supports early HIV treatment
Going off grid – is Tesla's Powerwall revolutionary, or just hype?
NHMRC releases lead report
Zap my brain: electro-discovery, electro-treatment and electro-doping
Federal Budget 2015
Bureau makes the call on El Niño
Aussie scientists find genetic changes associated with CFS (Immunology and Immunogenetics Insights)*
Ice blocked – responding to Antarctica's changing sea ice
Maurice Newman's climate change claims

JUNE 2015

Australia's 2015 flu season
Getting your head around MERS
Climate change a major threat to global health (The Lancet)*
Should Australia embrace a nuclear future? Yes v. No
Do the 'baby blues' begin before pregnancy? (The Lancet)*
Global warming 'slowdown' an illusion created by bad data (Science)*
Benefits outweigh harms for breast cancer screening (New England Journal of Medicine)*
Tackling the antibiotic apocalypse – Government releases National Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy



*Professor John Long - 17 October 2014
Briefing: The roots of sex (Nature)*

AUSSMC STAFF

The AusSMC went through a couple of changes between July 2014 and June 2015. We said goodbye to our Executive Assistant, Karen Noble in July, and welcomed Support Officer, Emily Erickson and Science Information Officer, Ben Kaldi.

At June 2015, the AusSMC staff consisted of:

- Dr Susannah Elliott, CEO
- Nigel Kerby, Project Manager
- Marilyn Arnold, Office Manager
- Lyndal Byford, Media Manager [on maternity leave]
- Dr Melanie Bagg, Business Development and Partnerships Manager
- Emily Erickson, Support Officer
- Ben Kaldi, Science Information Officer
- Dr Joseph Milton, Senior Media Officer
- Annika Dean, Media Officer
- Megan Wright, Media Officer



AusSMC staff from left: Nigel Kerby, Dr Susannah Elliott, Dr Melanie Bagg, Lyndal Byford, Annika Dean, Marilyn Arnold, Emily Erickson, Megan Wright, Dr Joseph Milton and Ben Kaldi.

AusSMC in the media

Along with a number of other media interviews the staff participated in, Susannah and Joe continued their involvement with the Research Filter segment on RN Drive, hosted by Patricia Karvelas.

AusSMC staff are on air about twice a month, and are a part of a weekly slot where science communicators discuss interesting science stories that have been in the media recently.

The interviews can be found at <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/drive>.



BOARD MEMBERS

The AusSMC Board, chaired by Peter Yates AM, meets four times a year. Deputy chairs are Robyn Williams from the ABC and Merlin Crossley, Dean of Science at UNSW. Board members at 30 June 2015 were:

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

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

Professor Merlin Crossley
 (Deputy Chair)
*Dean of Science, The
 University of New South
 Wales*

Harry Efthimiou
*Chief Finance & Strategy
 Officer,
 AIA Australia*

Jim Carroll
*Executive Producer, World
 News Australia, SBS*

John Croll
CEO, iSentia

Professor Karen Day
*Dean of Science, University of
 Melbourne*

Professor Graham Durant
*Director, Questacon - The
 National Science and
 Technology Centre*

Dr Michael Ellies
Media Consultant

Gavin Jackman
*Executive Global Head,
 Corporate Affairs and Social
 Responsibility, Orica Limited*



Brad Hatch
*Manager of Communications,
 Fairfax Media*

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

Sharon McHale
*Senior Director Public
 Affairs, CSL Limited*



Fiona McLeod
*External Affairs Manager,
 Australia Pacific LNG*

Anton Middleberg
*Pro-Vice Chancellor
 (Research), University of
 Queensland*

Dr Graham Mitchell
*Chief Scientist, State
 Government of Victoria*



Oona Nielssen
*General Manager:
 Communication, CSIRO*

Professor Mary O'Kane
*NSW Chief Scientist and
 Engineer*

Gordon Radford
*Partner,
 Johnson Winter & Slattery*

Leonie Walsh
Lead Scientist for Victoria



The Hon Jay Weatherill
*Premier, Government of South
 Australia*

Dr Paul Willis
Director, RiAus

PATRONS

Dr Alan Finkel AM
 Chancellor of Monash University
(National)

Baroness Professor Susan Greenfield CBE
 University of Oxford
(International)

SCIENCE ADVISORY PANEL

SAP members at 30 June 2015 were:

Professor Snow Barlow
University of Melbourne

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

Professor Alan Cooper
University of Adelaide



Professor Bob Williamson AO
University of Melbourne

Dr Geoff Garrett AO
Queensland Chief Scientist

Professor Richard Head
University of South Australia

Professor Robert Hill
SA Museum and University of Adelaide

Professor Marcia Langton AM
University of Melbourne

Emeritus Professor Ian Lowe AO
Griffith University



Professor Marcello Costa
Flinders University

Professor Derek Denton AC
University of Melbourne

Professor Peter Doherty AC
University of Melbourne

Professor Tim Flannery
Climate Council

Professor Michael Holland
President, Science and Technology Australia

Professor Bryan Gaensler
University of Toronto

Professor Patricia Vickers-Rich
Monash University



Professor Caroline McMillen
Vice-Chancellor, University of Newcastle

Emeritus Professor Sir Gustav Nossal AC CBE
University of Melbourne

Professor John Simons
Macquarie University

Professor Michelle Simmons
University of New South Wales

Professor Fiona Stanley AC
Patron, Telethon Institute for Child Health Research

Professor Malcolm Walter
University of New South Wales



SPONSORS AND AFFILIATES

All support is capped at 10% of the AusSMC's budget to maintain the Centre's independence. The AusSMC is grateful to the following supporters during 2014-2015.

Foundation Sponsors



Gold Sponsors



Affiliates



Supporters



FINANCIALS

INCOME

	2015 (\$)	2014 (\$)
Sponsorship Received	680,389.00	600,248.00
Project funds	178,911.00	207,012.00
Affiliation Funds	134,573.00	59,804.00
Cost recovery	9,898.00	13,309.00
Other Income	<u>12,617.00</u>	<u>14,263.00</u>
	1,016,388.00	894,636.00

OTHER INCOME

Interest Received	22,411.00	31,041.00
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TOTAL INCOME

1,038,799.00 925,677.00

EXPENDITURE

Salaries and wages	686,332.00	654,815.00
Project expenses	211,095.00	141,380.00
Program expenses	-	2,912.00
Briefings	9,728.00	14,590.00
Office expenses	42,542.00	49,451.00
Board meeting expenses	6,291.00	7,110.00
Depreciation	18,963.00	27,275.00
Travel expenses	22,837.00	11,516.00
Marketing and development costs	<u>9,440.00</u>	<u>10,686.00</u>

TOTAL EXPENDITURE

1,007,228.00 919,735.00

Surplus	31,571.00	5,942.00
Other comprehensive income	-----	-----
Total comprehensive surplus for the year	31,571.00	5,942.00
Retained surplus at the beginning of the financial year	<u>134,199.00</u>	<u>128,257.00</u>
Transfer to reserves	(10,000.00)	-
Retained surplus at the end of the financial year	155,770.00	134,199.00



The Australian Science Media Centre

The Science Exchange

55 Exchange Place

Adelaide SA 5000

Telephone 08 7120 8665

info@smc.org.au

PO Box 237

Rundle Mall SA 5000

smc.org.au