

Welcome, Early Career Researchers (ECRs)

At the 2008 Australian Academy of Science ECR workshop we asked ECRs how we could help them manage the various professional and academic issues that arise during their careers. We were told that the Academy should do more to publicise its activities, to mentor ECRs and to put them in contact with relevant Fellows of the Academy and other senior scientists. It was further proposed that the Academy could meet some ECR needs by representing the interests of younger researchers, who are often unfamiliar with the structures and dynamics of government, universities, research centres and industry. To represent ECR interests and establish ongoing links, the Academy will begin an ECRs newsletter, *Early Days*, which will contain information, perspectives and assistance.

Each issue will include an editorial by the Academy's Secretary for Science Policy, Professor Bob Williamson, on topics relevant to ECRs, science news items, an events diary and an update on awards and scholarships. We welcome comments on editorial topics, letters concerning ECR topics and suggestions for future subjects. We also welcome ECR participation – do you have information you think other ECRs should know? Or do you know other ECRs who would like to receive *Early Days*?

To subscribe to *Early Days* join the Academy ECR mailing list at www.science.org.au/events/ecr/ecrlist.htm

Please send feedback, letters and comments to Fiona Leves, Research Project Officer,
fiona.leves@science.org.au

From The Editor

Starting out

Here you are, an ECR in Australia or perhaps you are an Australian ECR overseas hoping to return home soon. You're planning your career but are concerned about the future.

The Australian Academy of Science counts among its Fellows the very best scientists in Australia and we care about the future of researchers who are at the start of their careers. All of you have the attributes, the intellect and the drive to become researchers of the highest quality, but you must be properly supported for this to occur.

First and foremost the Academy thinks that our country has to increase its commitment to research over the coming years. While we congratulate government on some excellent initiatives recently (such as the 1000 new mid-level posts funded through the ARC in all fields and the 100 Superscience ECR Fellowships) we do not think this is enough.

Many of you, Australia's early career scientific researchers, have no security and move from grant to grant every few years (or even annually). Others find it difficult to maintain a satisfactory commitment to teaching or balance the commitments of a young family and find the time necessary to continue first-rate research.



Whilst many of these problems require funding, some require commitments or policy adjustments from the research sector. Why is it so difficult to combine an appointment between universities, industry, CSIRO and/or DSTO?

As an ex-President of the Association of Australian Medical Research Institutes, it is good that the ARC & NHMRC are working more closely together but the Commonwealth and the states often seem miles apart. This needs to change if ECRs are to have the flexibility necessary to develop a long-term career in research.

Let us know what you think about these comments and what you foresee as unnecessary hurdles in your career. We may be able to do something about it.

Bob Williamson, AO, FAA, FRS

Bulletin board

AWARDS, SCHOLARSHIPS AND FUNDING

The Group of Eight offers eight annual fellowships to early career researchers in Europe to work in Go8 universities for up to six months. Each Fellowship is worth \$20,000.

For further information and to determine if you are eligible, go to:

www.go8.edu.au/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=78&Itemid=174

WOMEN IN RESEARCH

The European Union has recently issued an analysis of efforts to overcome obstacles faced by women in their scientific careers. Read an analysis of this and another recent EC report in *The Female Underclass in Nature*, 21 May 2009, p 299.

www.nature.com/nature/journal/v459/n7245/full/459299a.html

The Federation of Australian Scientific and Technological Societies and the Office of the Chief Scientist for Australia have commissioned a research project on women in science. The report focuses on the consequences of the under-representation of women in the science and technology workforce. A meeting of government, industry, education and research leaders in September at Parliament House in Canberra will discuss the outcomes of the report, and identify and refine potential strategies.

RURAL INDUSTRIES RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Research Priorities
Funding for 2010–11
Preliminary Research Proposals
due 25 September 2009.
www.rirdc.gov.au

The Prime Minister's Australia Asia Endeavour Awards

Nominations are sought by the
end of September 2009 for a
2010 commencement.
www.endeavour.deewr.gov.au

MORE MONEY?

We all argue for increased
funding for scientific research,
but does it really work? Read,
*Assessing the Impact of Science
Funding in Science*, 5 June 2009,
pp 1273-75.

www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/full/324/5932/1273

PRIMARY CONNECTIONS

The Academy has been very
active in trying to ensure
that every primary school in
Australia has an vibrant science
education program and have
currently reached 48 percent of
Australia's primary schools. See
information on their research
and programs at:

www.science.org.au/primaryconnections

AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH NATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE

Neurogenetics on the Apple Isle
Hotel Grand Chancellor, Hobart
15–17 November
www.asmr-nsc.org.au

Government and Research

Currently there are two discussion
papers out for comment

1) Mission Based Compacts for Universities.

This paper provides the starting
point for discussions between
universities and government as
they prepare to enter mission
based compacts. These compacts
will outline each institutions
unique mission relative to
national priorities, set goals and
will determine some university
funding in the coming years.

www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Documents/PDF/Compacts%20framework%20discussion%20paper%20July%202009.pdf

2) Sustainable Research Excellence in Universities – Issues Paper.

This paper is again aimed at
developing discussions between
universities and government, but
this time examining how funding
for the indirect costs of research
will be provided and distributed.

[www.innovation.gov.au/ScienceAndResearch/programs_funding/Pages/SustainableResearchExcellence\(SRE\).aspx](http://www.innovation.gov.au/ScienceAndResearch/programs_funding/Pages/SustainableResearchExcellence(SRE).aspx)

If you have a comment on these
or other recent government
announcements on science, please
send them through.