

President's foreword

The reporting period marks the first full year of the Rudd Government which has been characterised by an unprecedented number of reviews, many of which are related either directly or indirectly to science and technology. These included the Review of the National Innovation System by Dr Terry Cutler, the Review of the Higher Education System by Professor Denise Bradley and the Climate Change Review by Professor Ross Garnaut. In addition, there were a diverse range of inquiries initiated by Parliamentary Standing Committees. The Academy has been proactive in providing submissions, often within extremely tight timeframes, participating in consultations and appearing at public hearings.

While some reviews are still underway, many have reported. However, the world has changed so much since their initiation as a result of the global financial crisis that in most cases the government has deferred a specific response to the Budget process in May. There is cause for concern that the current focus on preserving existing jobs may compromise the capacity to make timely investments in research infrastructure and human capital that would help stimulate Australia's international competitiveness and provide jobs into the future. The government's ambitions and aspirations were recently articulated by Senator Kim Carr, Minister for Industry, Innovation, Science and Research, and they are laudable, but at the same time he was reticent about the time frame for turning them into actions.

Against this backdrop, the Academy was delighted by the government's early decision to continue to support and to increase funding for our primary and early secondary education programs. This was announced during a National Press Club address by Professor Julie Campbell, the Academy's Secretary for Education and Public Awareness, on 2 July 2008. The next stages of *Primary Connections* and *Science by Doing* will contribute to the 'education revolution' by providing a means of implementing the nationally consistent science curriculum being developed by the newly established National Curriculum Board. The positive feedback to the Board from long term collaborators in the state and territory education departments and from professional teaching organisations regarding the high quality and positive impacts of these programs has been gratifying indeed.

The national committees have maintained their strong performance and the international connections of the Academy continue to develop. This year Australia became a member of the InterAcademy Council, in addition to its ongoing membership of the Executive Committee of the InterAcademy Panel. The level of representation of Australians as members and office bearers of international scientific unions is substantial. There are currently five Presidents and eight Vice-Presidents amongst the 26 Australians known to be on the executive bodies of the 31 international unions for science to which the Academy subscribes.

Through the International Science Linkages Program 200 Australian scientists were awarded travel grants for collaborative research in Asia, Europe and North America this year. There was a very strong response to new bilateral grants with the European Commission to study and access facilities in various countries in Europe. A highlight of the year was a very successful workshop on remote sensing, the fifth in a series of reciprocal meetings on topics of mutual interest to Australia and China. The Academy was also invited by the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science and Research to participate in two Joint Science and Technology Committee meetings with the European Union and South Africa. The underpinning bilateral agreements provide an important mechanism for Australia to identify opportunities to build cooperative relationships with these countries.

The Academy places a high level of importance on outreach activities to younger researchers and the general public which have been particularly strong this year. Early- to mid-career researchers subscribing to the Academy's information network have benefited from increased levels of information, a record number participated in this year's Think Tank on preventative health that was supported for the first time by the

Theo Murphy (Australia) Fund, and five were sponsored to attend the Federation of Australian Science and Technology Societies annual *Science Meets Parliament* event. In addition we have consistently attracted close to capacity audiences to the Academy's monthly public lecture series that has renewable energy technologies as its focus.

The Academy is an organisation where long term service is a consistent and recurrent theme. Many of you will be aware that Faye Nicholas retired after 19 years working in almost all areas of the secretariat, and that Tania Turvey, who also had many roles, left after 15 years with the Academy. This year also marked: the retirement of Neil Ffrench after 10 years of valuable advice to the Finance Committee; the stepping down of David Curtis after seven years as chair of the board, and the transition to retirement of Rod Home after 25 years as editor, of *Historical Records of Australian Science*; and the completion of a second term on the CSIRO Publishing Board and as co-chair of the CSIRO Journals Board of Standards by Marilyn Renfree. I take this opportunity to express, on behalf of the Academy, my sincere thanks for their dedication and outstanding contributions. I am also very pleased to welcome Martin Waldron, John Passioura, Libby Robin and Pauline Ladiges who have agreed to succeed them.

Kurt Lambeck PresAA FRS
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