

100

issues of the newsletter

June 2015

1988

The challenge for science

Today, as never before, science is being challenged with the task of increasing its contributions to Australia's cultural and technological development. There is now a widespread recognition that unless we succeed in this task, Australia's future as a prosperous and developing community is by no means assured.

The Academy is pleased to respond to this challenge with the range of programs defined rapidly expanding our activities, in science education, in the promotion of research through scientific conferences, in the provision of information about science for the general public, in the recognition of excellence in research, in maintaining international scientific relations, in contributing to science policy considerations and by recording the history of the development of science and technology in Australia.

The first issue of this newsletter refers to a number of these activities. Others will be described in future issues.

With the exception of international scientific relations,



The President of the Academy

the Academy's activities, and its domestic needs, are supported largely through its own initiatives and the very substantial help of its friends. For example, the National Science and Industry Forum is supported entirely by the contributions provided by institutional supporters. The Boden, White and Fenner research conferences are the direct result of substantial individual contributions.

I believe that the time has come to involve a much wider circle of friends of science in the Academy's activities. This newsletter is one small but important step in that direction. I would welcome comments and suggestions from members of the community interested in any aspect of science, including advice on the sort of information you wish to see in this Academy newsletter.

- David Curtis.

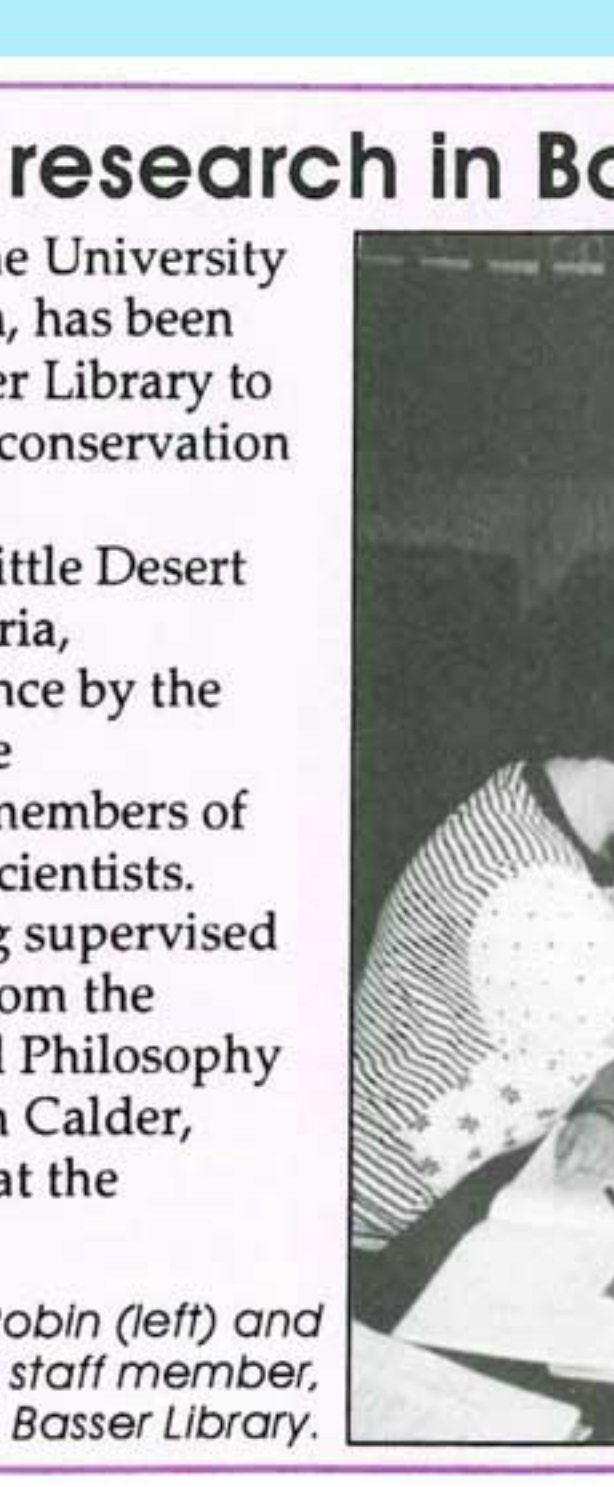
Committee recommends major space program

A specially convened Academy committee has recommended the establishment of a comprehensive Australian space program.

The recommendation is contained in a discussion paper that the committee has prepared on space science in Australia. The paper looks at the potential of basic research in space science to spur technological and industrial development, studying examples in astrophysics, solar-terrestrial physics and remote sensing.

The committee was set up to advise the Australian Space Office in the Department of Industry, Technology and Commerce on space policy. The chairman is the Academy's Foreign Secretary, Professor Keith Cole, from La Trobe University.

The committee said that the



A Skylark rocket lifts off from Woomera rocket range in South Australia to gather information on the upper atmosphere.

Australian Government should make space science a national priority. Among other things, the discussion paper recommended an expansion of collaborative international space research, support for airborne research in Australia, support for opportunities to manufacture space-flight hardware for Australian and overseas space projects, and a program for new and upgraded tracking stations and data centres.

The committee noted the loss of highly trained scientists to overseas countries and suggested measures to retain existing skills and encourage the education of space scientists, engineers and technicians.

The paper will be discussed at a conference in Melbourne this month and a final report will be published early in 1989.

1992

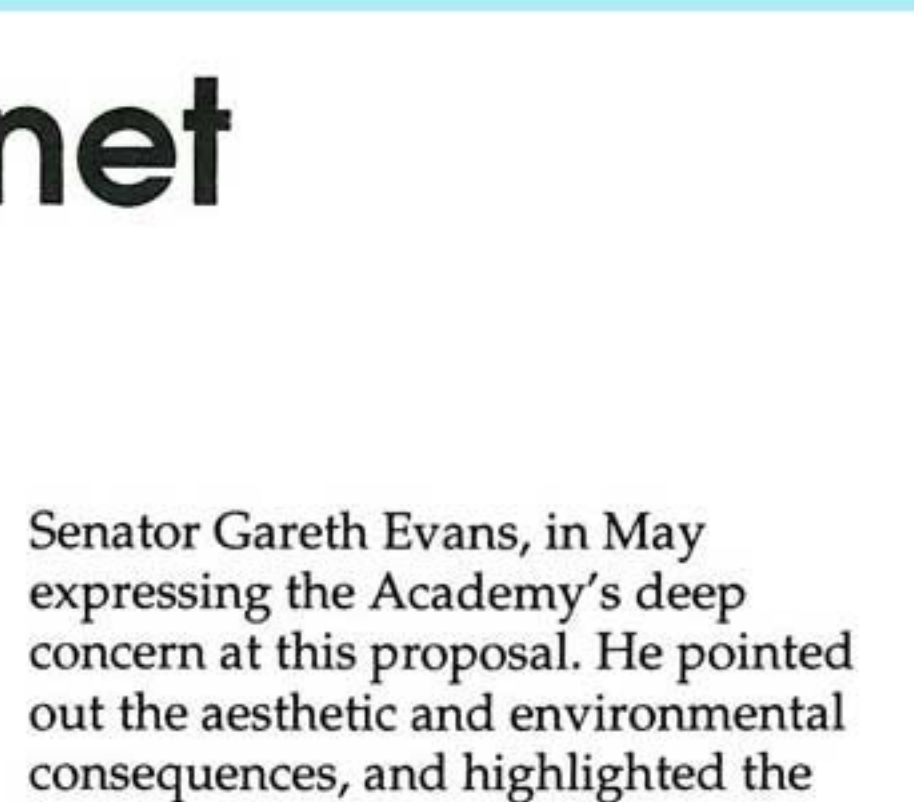
Conservation research in Basser Library

A research student from the University of Melbourne, Libby Robin, has been using the Academy's Basser Library to help her write a history of conservation in Victoria in the 1960s.

She is focusing on the Little Desert dispute in northwest Victoria, particularly the use of science by the different participants in the dispute—land managers, members of the public and university scientists.

Ms Robin's PhD is being supervised by Professor Rod Home, from the Department of History and Philosophy of Science, and Dr Malcolm Calder, from the School of Botany at the University of Melbourne.

Researcher Libby Robin (left) and Jo Justin, Academy staff member, working in Basser Library.



The Australian Foundation for Science

The first Annual General Meeting of the Australian Foundation for Science will be held at the Academy on 7 December. All individual and institutional supporters at Member level and above have been sent notices along with documentation.

Through the Australian Foundation for Science, the Academy has received pledges of \$2 381 387 of which \$1 006 877 has been received. The Foundation has 200 supporters, comprising 135 Fellows, 14 other individuals, 23 scientific societies, 8 corporations, 8 trade associations and 12 other institutions. Membership levels show 4 Patrons, 11 Governors, 12 Trustees, 69 Members, 97 Donors and 7 Sponsors.

Monica Young (left), member of the monuments subcommittee of the Geological Society of Australia, and Nancy Pittahara, Academy staff member, discuss geological sites to be included in the Foundation's science and technology bicycle trail map. The artwork for the map is in progress and it will be launched at the Australian Science Festival to be held in Canberra from 27 March to 4 April 1993.



1993

Off-the-planet advertising

People who appreciate unpolluted heavens will be pleased to know that the Academy has taken a strong stand against the latest onslaught of the advertising industry—advertising in space. Absurd though the idea is, it is technologically feasible and apparently being considered seriously in the United States.

A company known as Space Marketing International announced plans earlier this year to launch a space billboard into low-earth orbit in 1996. The billboard, which would unfurl into a sheet measuring 1 kilometre by 400 metres, would reflect sunlight and would thus be visible for a short time after sunset and again before sunrise. It would then shine more brightly than the full moon.

The President of the Academy, David Craig, wrote to both the Minister for the Environment, Mrs Ros Kelly, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade,

Senator Gareth Evans, in May expressing the Academy's deep concern at this proposal. He pointed out the aesthetic and environmental consequences, and highlighted the power of the billboard to do major damage to astronomical research. The increased light from the reflector would obliterate many forms of astronomy which require a dark sky. Many existing national and international astronomical facilities could be rendered impotent.

Professor Craig urged the Australian Government to take a stand, as it did so successfully on the issue of protection for Antarctica, and call on other governments around the world to set up a protocol which would set in place environmental monitoring safeguards. Australia's significant international reputation as a world leader in astronomy places us in a powerful position to achieve such a goal, concluded Professor Craig.

1996

Primary Investigations meets Prime Minister

While the news cameras rolled, the Prime Minister, Mr John Howard, chatted with primary school students carrying out Primary Investigations science activities. He and the Minister for Science, Mr Peter McGauran, talked to the students at a display set up for the Prime Minister's Science and Engineering Council meeting on 13 September.

Primary Investigations was developed by the Academy as a primary school program covering science, technology and the environment. Students work in small groups to carry out investigations and, in the process, they learn basic scientific principles.

The Prime Minister, Mr John Howard, talking to students from St Thomas the Apostle School in Kambah, ACT, about their straw towers, a Primary Investigations activity. Photo: Noel Gerathy, DIST



1997

Nova weaves science Web

The Academy launched its new World Wide Web site, *Nova: Science in the news* (<http://www.science.org.au/nova/>) on 8 April 1997.

The Minister for Science and Technology, Mr Peter McGauran, launched *Nova* at Parliament House, Canberra. He said that the site was a

one-stop material shop for reliable and up-to-date science, and that it bridged the gap between classroom theory and real-life science. He called it 'a potent weapon in the battle to encourage more young people into science careers'.

The President of the Academy, Sir Gustav Nossal, said that the purpose of

Nova was to provide accurate and up-to-date information about the scientific, health and environmental issues covered in the news media. 'The site is aimed at teachers, but it is useful to anyone with an interest in modern science.'

Topics now available include cloning, mad cow disease, rabbit calicivirus, the Human Genome Project, ozone depletion, uranium mining in Australia, direct solar energy, threatened species, and gene technology and plants.

The site was developed with funding from the Australian Foundation for Science, the Science and Technology Awareness Program of the Department of Industry, Science and Tourism, and BHP. Other organisations, including ACT Healthpac, the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research, the CSIRO Division of Plant Industry, the CSIRO Division of Biomolecular Engineering and the Biomolecular Research Institute, the Institute of Advanced Studies at the Australian National University and the Mazda Foundation, have contributed to particular topics.

Supported by the Australian Foundation for Science

2000

Search for Dome souvenirs

On 5 May Michael Caton, who starred as Darryl Kerrigan in the film *The Castle*, launched a search for souvenirs that feature the Academy's Dome. The search is being held to draw attention to the scientific and architectural importance of the Dome, which is being renovated. Michael Caton is pictured holding a miniature beer mug and the Academy's groundsman, Merv Lane, is holding a tray, both of which Merv has donated to the Academy.

The collection will be on display at the Canberra Museum and Gallery in April and May 2001. Please send any Dome souvenirs for the display to Dome Souvenir Search, Australian Academy of Science, GPO Box 783, Canberra ACT 2601. More information about the souvenir search is at www.science.org.au/dome/souvenir.htm.



2010

TRIBUTE

Frank Fenner

21 December 1914 – 22 November 2010



Frank Fenner at the Australian Academy of Science Annual General Meeting 2010

Passionate inquiry – the legacy of a science super hero

2011

Ian Chubb discussing the moon with a student at the launch of the 5Es DVD

2012

Science at the Shine Dome 2012

100 YEARS OF ANTARCTIC SCIENCE

2014

Australian Academy of Science

2015

Credit: Adi Chopra