

**FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIAN SCIENTIFIC  
AND TECHNOLOGICAL SOCIETIES**

Science and Technology for the Social, Environmental and Economic Benefit of Australia

**IN THIS ISSUE OF SCIENCE NEWS**

- |                                   |                                   |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. The Science Fellows Program    | 8. Subscriptions                  |
| 2. The Budget and Science         | 9. National Science Week          |
| 3. Workshops for Member Societies | 10. Oceans Eleven Report          |
| 4. Invitation to the Board        | 11. Universities Being Commercial |
| 5. "Science meets Parliament" Day | 12. Honours for Scientists        |
| 6. The Mapping Exercise           | 13. The PM on Science             |
| 7. Invite the Minister            |                                   |

**1. THE SCIENCE FELLOWS PROGRAM**

FASTS is interested in exploring the possibility of adopting the US program in Australia. Over the last 30 years it has enabled hundreds of American scientists to work in the Congress for a year.

Australia needs a program like this. Only five current federal parliamentarians (out of 226 Members and Senators) are scientists, and yet our Parliament deals with science-based issues daily.

The Swiss have adapted the program for their Parliament, and last month Dr Margrit Leuthold spent two days in Canberra meeting parliamentarians and officials of Parliament. She talked openly about the Swiss experience, to people ranging from the Minister to the Clerk of the Senate.

In the week June 16, FASTS has organised five former US Congressional Science Fellows to visit Australia, to discuss their experiences with parliamentarians and officials of Parliament.

The Fellows will also spend time at leading Australian research laboratories in Sydney and Melbourne. There will be a public meeting at the Academy of Science's Shine Dome on Tuesday June 17 at 5.15pm.

More information about the program and the visit is at [www.fasts.org](http://www.fasts.org)

**2. THE BUDGET AND SCIENCE**

FASTS was briefed on the Budget by the Minister and officers of DEST.

Our media release expressed "cautious optimism". Funding under "Backing Australia's Ability" will be delivered in full, on time; and none of the publicly-funded research agencies was cut.

We were disappointed in the limited funding to re-build Mt Stromlo.

Increased support for the higher education sector is both overdue and welcome. It is not yet clear how the new arrangements will affect science.

FASTS will take a close interest in a new review of funding arrangements for research agencies and universities.

The full release is available at [www.fasts.org](http://www.fasts.org)

A longer summary of the Budget by FASTS Vice-President David Denham is also presented on the FASTS web site.

**DISCLAIMER:** *The Federation of Australian Scientific and Technological Societies (FASTS) has taken all reasonable precautions and made all reasonable efforts to ensure the accuracy of material contained in this document. However, FASTS makes no warranties, express or implied, with respect to any material published in Science News.*

### **3. WORKSHOPS FOR MEMBER SOCIETIES**

Over 130 elected officers and executive officers of our Member Societies have attended FASTS workshops. They wanted better ways to deliver benefits to the individual scientists and technologists in their society.

Ideas from the workshops are currently being developed for the web, and will include:

- Planning for membership benefit
- Increasing input into policy and politics
- Mail merging to email
- Communication planning
- Attracting volunteers to run the society

### **4. INVITATION TO THE BOARD**

The next Board meeting will be in Sydney on 4-5 August, and the Presidents of all Member Societies will be invited to join an open session of the Board meeting at 4 pm on Monday.

### **5. "SCIENCE MEETS PARLIAMENT" DAY**

Registration for SmP 2003 will open in the next month, and available on the FASTS web site.

This event has had a tremendous impact on Parliament, helping change the attitudes of Parliamentarians towards the funding and impact of science.

We are flattered to see the first of the imitators has sprung up!

FASTS has written to the Premier of NSW and his new Minister for Science suggesting that NSW holds a state version of SmP. Victoria is also looking at its own version; and Queensland ran one last year.

### **6. THE MAPPING EXERCISE**

"Backing Australia's Ability" brought nearly \$3 billion of funding into the Australian science and research sector over 5 years. Now the Government is considering the next step.

The Mapping exercise aims to find out where new funds could most effectively be used. FASTS considers our 66 Member Societies do a great job of technology transfer through meetings and conferences, and surveyed Members for the Mapping Task Force.

The letter read: *"The impact of FASTS members on technology diffusion within Australia can probably be expressed in terms of 100 conferences and 700 technical meetings per year with up to 70,000 total attendees. This is a significant national contribution to Australia's efforts to maintain a strong, vibrant and environmentally sound modern economy. This contribution is made almost completely independently of direct Government support."*

### **7. INVITE THE MINISTER!**

Ministers and Shadow Ministers are keen to receive invitations to address meetings organised by your Society. This provides, of course, a great opportunity to raise issues of concern to your members.

The way to start is an invitation faxed through to the office of the Minister.

- Science Minister Mr Peter McGauran - fax 02 6277 7330
- Shadow Science Minister Senator Kim Carr - fax 03 9639 3109
- Democrat Senator Natasha Stott Despoja - fax 08 8232 7601

Other Ministers and their phone numbers are available at the Parliament House website: [www.aph.gov.au](http://www.aph.gov.au)

## **8. SUBSCRIPTIONS**

Subscription notices will be circulated at the end of this month. The amount is based on the number of full members in the Society. In other words, honorary and student members should not be counted.

The number should be taken from the last complete year of the Society. If it runs on a financial year basis, it will be the number of members on 30 June 2003. If it runs on a calendar year basis, it will be the number on 31 December 2002. The standard rate is \$5 per member plus GST.

In June we will send all Societies a note to let them know what our record of their member numbers is. Some Societies will need to amend this figure. Subscription notices will be emailed to the President on July 1 (and copied to the Treasurer).

## **9. NATIONAL SCIENCE WEEK**

National Science Week is an annual celebration of science, technology and innovation. It runs 16 - 24 August 2003, and Societies may like to get involved.

For event information, ideas, contacts, promotional support and media advice, see [www.scienceweek.info.au](http://www.scienceweek.info.au) or email [scienceweek@orac.net.au](mailto:scienceweek@orac.net.au) or telephone: 02 6205 0281.

## **10. OCEANS ELEVEN REPORT**

The Australian Marine Sciences Association would like to highlight the recent release of the Oceans Eleven Report on the Implementation of Australia's Oceans Policy and Ecosystem-Based Regional Marine Planning by the Australian Conservation Foundation (see [www.acfonline.org.au/asp/pages/document.asp?IdDoc=1251](http://www.acfonline.org.au/asp/pages/document.asp?IdDoc=1251)).

## **11. UNIVERSITIES BEING COMMERCIAL**

The FASTS policy 3.4.4 reads: "Combine university technology-transfer arms to concentrate scarce expertise, with scientists able to approach any of them for advice."

It is good to see this idea has registered. The Canberra Times reported a speech to the National Press Club by Chief Scientist Robin Batterham as follows: "... Dr Batterham got down to the difficult detail by proposing that Australia's 38 universities should not maintain individual commercialisation units. "It seems madness that every institution, be it a small regional university, a large one, or a government-funded research agency, looks to having its own commercialisation facility," he said.

"He suggested that the nation's researchers would be best served by just five commercialisation bodies. ..."

## **12. HONOURS FOR SCIENTISTS**

In the last Australia Day Honours list, scientists were conspicuous by their absence. Has your Society considered nominating a distinguished member for an award for his/her outstanding achievement? Your President, for example?

Details of the nomination process are given on [www.itsanhonour.gov.au/about\\_honours.html](http://www.itsanhonour.gov.au/about_honours.html)

## **13. THE PM ON SCIENCE**

An extract from the Prime Minister's CEDA speech of 20 November 2002 reads:

*"Let me turn to an equally vital area of Government strategic policy interest, and that is science and innovation. Investment in science and innovation is an investment in Australia's economic and social prosperity.*

*"New knowledge and new ways of doing science enable us to push the boundary of what is possible with our resources and help build solutions to issues in areas such as health, the environment and industrial development."*

The full speech is shown at [www.pm.gov.au/news/speeches/2002/speech1996.htm](http://www.pm.gov.au/news/speeches/2002/speech1996.htm)