



Neuroscience in Australia & New Zealand & the role of ANS

Sarah Dunlop, President 2010-11

Meetings with:-

Prof Max Bennett, AO, BMRI	May 26 th
NeuRA	May 28 th
Monash Neuroscience Network	June 2 nd
Andrew Milner, Neurosciences Australia	June 22 nd
Prof Geoff Donnan, Howard Florey	June 22 nd
Tasmania (State Rep: Rob Gasperini)	August 25 th
Victoria (State Rep: Jo Britto)	August 26 th
NSW (State Rep: Peregrine Osborne)	September 13 th
Garvan	September 14 th
University of Newcastle	September 15 th
South Australia (State Rep: Nick Spencer)	October 13 th
ACT (State Rep: Clarke Raymond)	October 18 th
Queensland (State Rep: Lizzie Coulson)	October 20 th
WA (State Rep: Lindy Fitzgerald)	November 5 th
New Zealand (State Rep: Louise Nicholson)	TBA (ANS meeting, Auckland)

AGENDA

- I CURRENT ROLE OF ANS
- II ISSUES FACING NEUROSCIENCE
- III ANS AS A PEAK BODY
- IV RAISING PROFILE OF NEUROSCIENCE - WAY FORWARD
- V OTHER ISSUES

I CURRENT ROLE OF ANS

On the ANS website, the Society states the following:

“2. Object

2.1 The primary object of the Society shall be the advancement of the neurosciences by facilitating the dissemination of information pertaining to neuroscience, in teaching and research, by conducting meetings, seminars and lectures at local and national levels.

2.2 An additional object is the actual undertaking of research for the benefit of Australia, by clarifying the actions of the nervous system and how diseases of the nervous system can be treated. This may take the form of presenting novel data at workshops and / or the publishing of novel data generated by members of the Society.”

- The major role of the Society is thus to run its annual scientific meeting which it has accomplished highly successfully since 1981.
- Given that the meeting is run largely by the Local Organising Committee and Sally Jay Conferences, should ANS assume other roles? This question was first raised by Glenda Halliday, President, 2006-07).
- David Vaney (Past President, 2010-11) pointed out at the 2010 AGM that the size of the Society is such that it is on a cusp: it is too small to afford a full-time Secretariat but is large enough to need professional staff to fulfill, and perhaps expand, its role.

II ISSUES FACING NEUROSCIENCE

- As a proportion of the total, NHMRC funding for Neuroscience and Clinical Neuroscience combined has consistently fallen (2005: Total = \$411m / proportion for Neuroscience and Clinical Neuroscience 10.93%; 2006: \$451m / 9.47%; 2007: \$534m / 8.92%; 2008: \$626m; 2009: \$707m / 8.25%). ARC funding also declining as a proportion.
- A recent publication on NHMRC funding (Butler and Henadeera, Feb 2009 “Measuring Up”; Research evaluation and policy project) states that: “...neuroscience remains the discipline with the lowest impact, albeit this time above the world benchmark”. Impact is defined as “Relative citation and journal impact”.
- Recent analysis of ARC funding said the same “....psychiatry-psychology, neuroscience-behaviour and economics and business were rated weakest on world impact” (Australian Innovation System Report 2010; The Australian HES, May 5th).
- Funding from the Commonwealth for FASTS, one of our major, albeit general, lobby science and research groups, will cease beyond 2011 (May Budget, 2010).
- An analysis by Glenda during her Presidency showed that that, from 2002-2005, success rates for NHMRC neuroscience project grants reviewed was considerably lower than the total success rate for all panels (e.g. 2002: 23% vs 25%, 2005: 17% vs 23%). Recent data?

III ANS AS PEAK BODY

PEAK BODY DEFINITION:

“Peak body is a representative organisation that provides information dissemination services, membership support, coordination, advocacy and representation, and research and policy development services for members and other interested parties. the peak council role does not involve direct service provision.” (Industry Commission, 1995:181).

“A peak organisation or peak body in Australia is an association of industries or groups. Theyact on behalf of all members when lobbying government or promoting the interests of the members.” (Wiki).

Currently, ANS is a peak body

- We represent, in the main, basic neuroscientists and do so for by far the majority (membership ~1,000) of neuroscientists in Australia and New Zealand
- We provide information dissemination services, membership support, coordination etc
- We also provide advocacy and representation to the public (State based activities including Australian Brain Bee Competition etc)

However,

- We do not represent our views on neuroscience to government; rather, we leave lobbying to FASTS/ASMR
- We do not have a broad membership of clinical neuroscientists and the professions such as neurology and psychiatry
- The size of the Society is such that it is on a cusp: it is too small to afford a paid Secretariat but is large enough to need professional staff to fulfill, and perhaps expand, its role as a national peak body.

IV RAISING PROFILE OF NEUROSCIENCE - WAY FORWARD

- Bottom-up approach: greater support for early career researchers?
- Top-down approach: greater role in advocacy & lobbying?
- Other approaches: ??
- Funding issues: Paid secretariat; Institutional membership?

V OTHER ISSUES

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