

**MEDIA RELEASE**  
**3pm, Tuesday 18 August 2009**

**2009 Tall Poppies of science: Award winners announced**

**Winners of the prestigious 2009 SA Young Tall Poppy Science Awards were announced at an exciting breakfast event on Tuesday 18 August.**

Cancer, vision, fish, metals and pregnancy care for Aboriginal women ... These are just some of the topics in science research made by this year's winners. And this is what they'll spend the year talking to high school students about.

Selected on the basis of research achievements and a passion for communicating their work, 10 South Australian scientists under 35 were recognised with Young Tall Poppy Science awards on Tuesday morning (winners listed on page 3).

"The Young Tall Poppy Science Awards recognise scientific achievers who are in the early stage of their careers and already making discoveries," says Australian Institute of Policy and Science Executive Director, Elektra Spathopoulos.

Instead of winning prize money, these young scientists gain the opportunity to take their research to school students around SA and across Australia as part of the Tall Poppy Campaign to inspire a new generation to get passionate about science.

"These Award winners represent the future of great science in Australia; they are not only the brightest young people addressing the crucial issues facing our society, they are also the best people for the job of inspiring the next generation in science," adds Spathopoulos. With unprecedented scientific policy challenges like climate change, at the same time as declining enrolments in high school chemistry, maths and physics subjects, inspiring young people about science has never been more urgent.

"The Awardees will be role models for high school students who are thinking seriously about their senior subject choices, their tertiary education and future careers," Spathopoulos explains. "They will demystify science and demonstrate to the next generation that science careers in Australia are fun and rewarding, and can make a real contribution to the health, productivity, and sustainability of our society," adds Spathopoulos.

With the Tall Poppy Campaign now in its twelfth year, numerous former Young Tall Poppy Science Award winners have gone on to win more senior science awards, including Eureka Prizes, Prime Minister's Prizes for Science and *Cosmos* Bright Sparks Awards.

The Tall Poppy Campaign is a project of the Australian Institute of Policy and Science, with support in South Australia from the Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology and each of the three South Australian Universities.

The Awards were presented by The Hon Michael O'Brien, Minister for Science and Technology, along with His Excellency, Rear Admiral Kevin Scarce AC CSS RANR, Governor of South Australia, both of whom also made strong speeches in support of

the work of the Tall Poppy awardees and the Tall Poppy Campaign. Another keynote speaker was Professor Gavin Brown AO FAA CorrFRSE, Inaugural Director, Royal Institution Australia. Special guests also included students and teachers from South Australian schools The Heights, Underdale High, Blackwood High and Ross Smith High School, and Hon Trish White, Minister for Taylor; Dr Ian Chessell, South Australian Chief Scientist; Raymond Garrand, CE DFEEST; Director Bev Rogers, Curriculum Director, Numeracy and Sciences, DECS; Vice-Chancellor and President Professor Peter Hoj, UniSA; and Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Andrew Beer, Flinders University. Also in attendance was Cathryn McDonald, Bronze Medalist in the 40<sup>th</sup> International Physics Olympiad held in Mexico earlier in the year.

**The event was held:**

Observatory Function Centre  
23 Hackney Road  
Hackney SA  
Tuesday 18 August  
7.30am – 9.30am

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The Tall Poppy Campaign was created in 1998 by the Australian Institute of Policy and Science ([www.aips.net.au](http://www.aips.net.au)) to recognise and celebrate Australian intellectual and scientific excellence and to encourage younger Australians to follow in the footsteps of our outstanding achievers. The Tall Poppy Campaign currently recognises the achievements of Australian scientists through the prestigious annual Young Tall Poppy Science Awards and the biennial CSL Florey Medal. The Campaign's Tall Poppies Reaching Students Program engages the winners of Young Tall Poppy Science Awards ('Tall Poppies') in activities to promote study and careers in science among school students, teachers and the broader community.

**For further comment on the awards and the Tall Poppy Campaign:**

Elektra Spathopoulos, Executive Director, AIPS and the Tall Poppy Campaign – (02) 9351 0819 or M: 0422 204 790.

**LIST OF AWARD WINNERS ON FOLLOWING PAGE (in no particular order)...**

**Dr Claudine Bonder**  
**Head of Laboratory**  
**Vascular Biology and Cell Trafficking**  
**Centre for Cancer Biology, SA Pathology**

Claudine studies the intricate network of blood vessels that carry cells throughout our body. Her laboratory works with endothelial cells, the cells that line the blood vessels, and uses leading technology to better understand their role in normal and disease states.

Claudine's vision of identifying and then targeting what controls vascular development seeks to eliminate the vasculogenesis associated with the two major killers in the Western world, cancer and cardiovascular disease, coming closer to the availability of long lasting therapies and perhaps a cure.

In addition to her regular involvement in public research tours, seminars and communication events, as Australian Convenor for the World Day of Immunology (29 April), Claudine coordinates information exchange and activities for the general public on immunology and health.

The former recipient of an Early Career Research Award from the Australian Academy of Science, Claudine's research continues to have high impact in her field, attracting over \$1.3m of much sought after research money from national funding agencies and commercial enterprises to South Australia.

**Dr Joanne M Bowen**  
**NHMRC Training Fellow and Affiliate Lecturer**  
**Supportive Care in Cancer**  
**University of Adelaide**

Joanne looks into the reasons why some people are more likely than others to have severe side effects during the course of their anti-cancer treatment.

She is also interested in how the lining of the gut is affected by anti-cancer agents, and investigating new drugs that may be able to protect the gut from damage. Having a better understanding of the mechanisms that cause toxic effects of cancer treatment would mean an improved ability to develop agents that successfully prevent these nasty side effects.

Joanne is the recipient of numerous awards, and was recognised by the Multinational Association of Supportive Care in Cancer as their 2006 Young Investigator of the Year.

The author of around a hundred book chapters, peer-reviewed articles and abstracts, including almost a dozen review articles, Joanne makes a significant contribution to supportive care in cancer research, and is proud to be part of the world-class research environment within South Australia.

**Dr Kathryn P Burdon**  
**Ophthalmic Genetics**  
**Peter Doherty Research Fellow**  
**Flinders University**

Vision is a thing most people take for granted, but it is one of the most precious and most relied on attributes in daily life. The overall aim of Kathryn's research is to find out which genes cause diseases that can lead to blindness.

Working on common diseases including cataract, glaucoma, keratoconus and diabetic eye disease, Kathryn uses a variety of techniques to identify differences in the genes of people with these diseases compared to people without them to begin to understand the causes of each disease.

Kathryn values the opportunity to contribute to improving vision throughout the world, and also finds that her career in science helps to satisfy her natural curious streak.

The author of 40 journal articles in the past six years, Kathryn has also communicated her research on television, radio, invited talks, and for an audio magazine distributed to blind and visually impaired subscribers.

**Dr Travis Elsdon**  
**Research Fellow**  
**Fish Ecology and Estuarine Ecology**  
**University of Adelaide**

Travis studies fish and estuaries, and his work focus on understanding water quality and fish movements. He uses chemicals within fish earbones to determine movements, migrations, and stock structure of fish, and also uses stable isotopes to determine fish diet.

As the world becomes more reliant on natural resources, such as fish, Travis has highlighted the importance of understanding fish biology in order to maintain fish stock through sustainable harvests.

Always keen to promote science in rural areas, Travis is not afraid to engage the local community, and has recruited members of the public to collect fish for his projects as part of the Kangaroo Island Community Education program.

As well as formal rewards for his research, such as an Early Career Research Excellence Award from the University of Adelaide, Travis has also benefited from fantastic travel opportunities, such as voyaging 2500 meters below the sea in a deep sea submersible.

**Dr Hugh H Harris**  
**Bioinorganic Chemistry**  
**Senior Lecturer**  
**University of Adelaide**

Hugh looks at what happens when metals enter a living organism, and uses new technologies, often synchrotron-based, to identify the location of metals and their chemical form in cells and tissues. With this information he hopes to determine precisely what metals are doing in the body, good or bad, and their roles in diseases such as cancer, cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

One of Hugh's current goals is to understand, from a molecular perspective, the reduced incidence of cancers in people who have increased dietary intake of certain selenium compounds.

Hugh has demonstrated a strong commitment to encouraging public understanding of his research results, and has featured in national media including an appearance on the ABC radio show *The Health Report*.

The author of more than 30 peer-reviewed journal articles since 2001, including first-author papers in the prestigious journal *Science*, Hugh is also the recipient of numerous awards, and a current Australian Research Council Queen Elizabeth II Fellow.

**Dr Karen Murphy**  
**Research Fellow**  
**Nutrition & Cardiometabolic Health**  
**University of South Australia**

Karen's research aims to determine how diet can improve physical and mental health throughout the lifespan. More specifically, she studies how functional foods and nutrients can help people improve their cardiovascular health and psychological wellbeing, such as memory.

By working with volunteers from the public, Karen enjoys an ability to observe direct impacts of diet on people's health and lifestyles, and is rewarded by the influence of her studies on government health policies.

Karen has coordinated events and public lectures as Chair of the local branch of the Nutrition Society of Australia, and has worked with various medical, health and sports organisations, including a role as nutritionist with the Port Adelaide Football Club which include the premiership year.

The value of Karen's research has been recognised in numerous awards from industry, societies, peak bodies and government agencies, and she currently holds \$1.2 million in research funding.

**Dr Alice Rumbold**  
**Reproductive Health**  
**Senior Research Fellow**  
**The University of Adelaide & Menzies School of Health Research**

Alice investigates the causes and consequences of women's reproductive health problems. Recently her research has been directed to improving outcomes for Aboriginal women, by studying the occurrence and impact of common infections such as Human Papillomavirus (HPV) that can cause women's reproductive cancers, and by looking at ways to provide the most appropriate care in pregnancy for Aboriginal women.

Her work is actively informing health programs to optimise the health of young Aboriginal women now and in the future.

Alice is committed to public engagement in the research process, and is frequently involved in presenting to Aboriginal health boards and community meetings. In addition, her research has featured in national and international media, including the Wall Street Journal, Reuters Health, Child Magazine, and the NBC News Channel, as well as local and national ABC radio.

Her work has been acclaimed by numerous awards and fellowships, including a New Investigator Award at the Perinatal Society of Australia and New Zealand 6th Annual Congress.

**Dr Christopher J Sumbly**  
**Lecturer**  
**Supramolecular Chemistry**  
**The University of Adelaide**

Christopher makes new chemical compounds, using weak links between components to form cage-like structures much larger than regular molecules. The synthesis of such cage-like structures, which can trap guest molecules within a central cavity, may feature in new modes of drug delivery, or could be used as nanoscale flasks in which to carry-out chemical reactions in isolation, one molecule at a time.

Another aspect of Christopher's research is concerned with making chemical sensors, which can tell us about environments too small to measure with other techniques - simply by glowing.

As well as participating in frequent public lectures and activities, Christopher is increasingly featured in the media, often providing informed opinion on topical science issues as well as highlighting his own research.

Christopher's successful international research career has resulted in 30 journal publications, and has been recognised in fellowships awarded in Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom.

**Dr Nam Q Nguyen**  
**Consultant and Senior Lecturer**  
**Gastroenterology**  
**Royal Adelaide Hospital & The University of Adelaide**

Nam is a practising medical doctor who specialises in the diseases of the gastrointestinal tract and liver. His clinical research focuses on the function of the gut in critically ill patients, strategies to achieve weight loss in the obese, and techniques to improve outcomes in people with pancreatic cancer.

Studies on gut function in the critically ill have led to development of new treatment protocols that improve patient's outcomes. Nam's current studies involve a novel, non-invasive anti-obesity device placed into the gut using endoscopy, and new techniques to screen high risk patients for pancreatic cancer.

A role model for Vietnamese youth in South Australia, Nam recently established an educational and research exchange program between the University of Adelaide and Ho Chi Minh City University of Vietnam.

Nam is a former South Australian Young Citizen of the Year, and the author of over fifty publications including chapters in five clinical textbooks.

**Dr Matthew Haren**  
**Research Fellow**  
**Epidemiology**  
**University of South Australia**

Matt's research focuses on health and wellbeing issues that are considered important by regional communities. Working with communities to address these issues, Matt concentrates on aspects of health and wellbeing related to obesity and ageing.

Matt researches ways to address factors that impact on obesity and ageing, including social conditions, natural and built environments, employment, and personal behaviours. Developing strong partnerships with rural and regional communities is an integral part of Matt's research.

A South Australian Great Speakers in Schools regional speaker since 2007, Matt also engages the wider community through ABC radio and television appearances, and has contributed health research articles to a local community newspaper.

Matt's career in public health has involved positions in Australia and overseas, working in varied environments including universities, hospitals, a rural health school and even a sports centre. He is the author of over twenty-five peer-reviewed publications, including four book chapters and seven review articles.

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