

**Young WA Researchers win Prestigious National Prize  
Embargoed – 11am AWST Thursday 2 November 2017**

Western Australia's best young scientists will be recognised at the state ceremony of the prestigious Young Tall Poppy Science Awards. (Thursday 2 November).

The awards are run by the Australian Institute of Policy and Science (AIPS) to honour up-and-coming scientists who combine world-class research with a passionate commitment to communicating science.

Five early career WA scientists have been chosen from disciplines spanning Exercise Science, Nanotechnology and Astrophysics.

AIPS General Manager Camille Thomson said the awards, which are held state-by-state, celebrate the country's best and brightest young achievers across the sciences.

"Many Young Tall Poppies go on to achieve even greater things and become inspiring leaders in their field," she said. "They also become role models by working with the education and community sectors to encourage greater engagement in science."

This year the awards are partnering with the WA Museum to showcase their Dinosaur Discovery exhibit. The WA Tall Poppy Scientist of the Year will be announced on the night.

The Awards are made state-by-state and were first awarded in WA in 2010 and has celebrated over 30 scientists in the past 7 years, joining over 600 scientists nationwide. The Campaign is generously supported in Western Australia by The University of Western Australia, Curtin University and Edith Cowan University.

Young Tall Poppies are nominated by their peers and are early career researchers aged 35 or under. Selection is based on research achievement and leadership potential.

Media are invited to the award presentation at Edith Cowan University.

**Event details:**

Date: Thursday 2 November 2017

Venue: Perth Exhibition and Convention Centre

Time: 6.pm

**Photo/ vision/ interview opportunities:**

- Young Tall Poppy Award recipients
- Camille Thomson - AIPS General Manager

The AIPS is an independent, not-for-profit organisation that works to promote excellence in research and innovation, increase public engagement in science and inform and influence policymaking.

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For media enquiries and further background on winners, please contact:

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## 2017 WESTERN AUSTRALIA TALL POPPY AWARD WINNERS

**Dr Monika Murcha**  
**University of Western Australia**  
**Molecular Biology**

Our rising population means that we need to implement strategies now to increase global food production by 50%. One strategy is to develop plants with more harvestable products, that are super-efficient, can thrive with limited fertiliser and survive changing environments. By starting at the source of energy within a cell, the mitochondria, we can control the plants energy source. Dr Murcha has identified specific gatekeepers that can regulate the rate of protein import into mitochondria and thus regulate energy production. She is now searching for the master regulators of these gatekeepers, factors that regulate mitochondrial activity and energy production

**Dr Nadim Darwish**  
**Curtin University**  
**Nanotechnology**

Dr Darwish's research explores using individual atoms and molecules as "Lego" to create the tiniest electrical components. This research will revolutionize existing technologies, like computers, and open up a realm of possibilities that may allow us to lead better, cleaner, and more efficient lives. Imagine super computers that can solve the hardest problems facing our societies, sensors that can detect the tiniest amount of a harmful substance or a device that generates new drugs. This is possible using molecular electronics.

**Dr Natasha Hurley-Walker**  
**Curtin University**  
**Astrophysics**

The field that Dr Hurley-Walker works in is called radio astronomy: she uses radio telescopes to look out into the universe and pick up radio waves. She helped to commission the Murchison Widefield Array, and over three years, has used it to construct a model of the entire low-frequency radio sky of the southern sky, the GaLactic and Extragalactic All-sky MWA survey (GLEAM).

**Dr Nicolas Hart**  
**Edith Cowan University**  
**Oncology and Carcinogenesis, Exercise Medicine**

Dr Hart is a cancer researcher, focusing on the ability of targeted exercise to slow tumour growth, prevent new tumours forming, delay disease progression and increase survival in advanced cancer patients. In particular, his research examines how tumours in the human body respond to different types of exercise in patients at the advanced stages of cancer, and how these changes can help current cancer treatments work more effectively.

**Dr Sofie De Meyer**  
**Murdoch University**  
**Agricultural Microbiology**

Dr De Meyer's group investigated similar climates to Australia around the world and found a plant called Lebeckia in South Africa, which is It is a deep-rooted perennial legume that, without summer rainfall, can be used to feed livestock during hot, dry summer months. This gives farmers the opportunity to provide their sheep with green feed throughout the year. Dr De Meyer's current research focuses on understanding how the symbiotic relationship develops, how Burkholderia microsymbionts fix nitrogen in the roots and how we can ensure the symbiosis is optimised for plant growth.

