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# AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE of POLICY and SCIENCE

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## **MEDIA RELEASE 2009 Tall Poppy Science Awards: Victorian & Tasmanian winners announced**

**Winners of the prestigious 2009 Victorian & Tasmanian Young Tall Poppy Science Awards were announced at an inspiring cocktail event on Thursday 17 September.**

**Malaria treatments, hydrogen-fuelled cars, heart disease, new broadband technologies, and “why give up sex?”** ... these are just some of the topics in science research investigated by this year’s winners. And it’s also a taste of what they’ll be talking to schools and communities about in coming months and years.

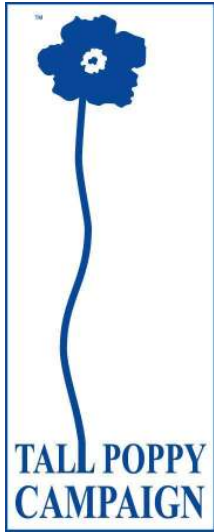
Selected on the basis of research achievements and a passion for communicating their work, 11 Victorian & Tasmanian scientists under 35 were recognised with Young Tall Poppy Science awards (winners listed below). There was also one overall winner from each state – Dr Emily Hilder (The University of Tasmania), and Dr Michael Kearney (The University of Melbourne) – who each received a coveted 2009 Tall Poppy of the Year trophy. This is the first year awards were presented in Tasmania, and builds on the successes of the campaign across Australia. The Victorian Tall Poppy Campaign was first established in 1999, and has made awards annually since 2006.

“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. “Not only are they great researchers, they have demonstrated their leadership in communicating science and engaging the public.”

Instead of winning prize money, these young scientists gain the opportunity to take their research to school students, teachers and communities around their State and across Australia as part of the Tall Poppy Campaign inspiring 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 Dr Sarah Meachem, Victorian Tall Poppy Ambassador. With unprecedented scientific policy challenges like climate change, energy generation and water security, at the same time as declining enrolments in school and university science, technology, engineering and maths courses, inspiring young people about science has never been more urgent.

“The Awardees will be the latest valued additions to a network that provides inspiration and education to school students who are making subject choices that will affect their future careers,” Meachem 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.”

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, and receives support in Victoria from Victoria University, Monash University, The University of Melbourne, and Deakin University. The awards were held at the Burnet Institute.

The Awards were presented by World Paper Plane Champion, Dylan Parker (22), who took the opportunity to demonstrate some of his creations. Dylan’s inspirational story of his battle with a life-threatening brain tumour recently featured on ABC’s Australian Story.

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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 more information, images, or to arrange interviews, contact:**

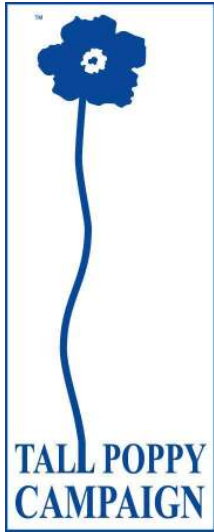
Pamela McLeod, Victorian & Tasmanian Campaign Manager – M: 0402 228 507, [mcleodp@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:mcleodp@unimelb.edu.au) .

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

Dr Sarah Meachem, Victorian Tall Poppy Ambassador – (03) 9594 3609

**LIST OF AWARD WINNERS ON FOLLOWING PAGE ...**

[Full details and images of all the winners are available on the AIPS website: [www.aips.net.au](http://www.aips.net.au)]



**Dr Michael Kearney - VICTORIAN TALL POPPY OF THE YEAR 2009**  
**Research Field: Ecology and Evolutionary Biology**  
**The University of Melbourne**

One of Michael's research topics tackles the question – "why give up sex?" He studies grasshoppers, stick insects and geckos from the Australian arid zone, which have given up sex and reproduce instead by cloning. By understanding what makes these asexual species successful, Michael hopes to describe the ecological and evolutionary forces that shape our largest ecosystem.

**Dr Emily Hilder - TASMANIAN TALL POPPY OF THE YEAR 2009**  
**Research Field: Analytical Chemistry**  
**The University of Tasmania**

Emily's research is in the field of separation science, which involves the separation of complex mixtures into their components. This important enabling science is relevant to applications such as drug testing in sport, environmental monitoring for air and water quality, DNA profiling, and many types of diagnostic tests for human disease. Emily develops new technologies that can be used to improve the quality of separations, or to enable separations of more complex mixtures than is possible today.

**Dr Daniel Ierodiaconou**

Research Field: Environmental Management and Ecology  
Deakin University

**Dr Seana Gall**

Research Field: Cardiovascular Epidemiology  
Menzies Research Institute, University of Tasmania

**Dr Wouter P Schellart**

Research Field: Geophysics and Structural Geology  
Monash University

**Dr Elaine Wong**

Research Field: Optical Fibre Communications and Networking  
The University of Melbourne

**Dr Daniel Price**

Research Field: Astrophysics  
Monash University

**Dr Michelle Dunstone**

Research Field: Biochemistry, Immunology & Microbiology  
Monash University

**Dr Chris Manzie**

Research Field: Engineering (Control Systems)  
The University of Melbourne

**Dr Alison Funston**

Research Field: Physical Chemistry – Nanoscience  
The University of Melbourne

**Dr Jacob Baum**

Research Field: Molecular and Cellular Parasitology  
Walter & Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research