

TALL POPPY CAMPAIGN

Investing in Australia's Future

EMBARGOED MEDIA RELEASE

Embargoed until 6.30pm Thursday 29 October

2009 Young Tall Poppies of science announced

Winners of the prestigious 2009 Young Tall Poppy Science Awards for NSW and ACT will be announced on Thursday 29 October.

From looking back into the environments of our past ancestors to creating new materials that will affect how we live our lives in the future, these young researchers in NSW and ACT have got it covered.

This year's crop of 18 Young Tall Poppies are from all areas of science and various backgrounds, but they have one thing in common, outstanding scientific research and a passion for communicating science to the wider community.

These young scientists will spend the next year reaching out to teachers, school students their parents and the broader community around NSW, ACT and across Australia as part of the Tall Poppy Campaign run by the Australian Institute of Policy and Science.

"The Young Tall Poppy Science Awards recognise early career researchers who have achieved significant scientific milestones," says Australian Institute of Policy and Science Executive Director, Elektra Spathopoulos.

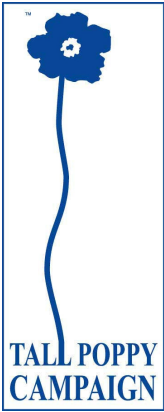
"The winners represent the brightest researchers investigating the important issues that benefit all Australians such as improved health treatments and finding renewable energy solutions," adds Spathopoulos.

With increased public debate on science issues and policy, and decreased enrolments in senior high school science, the need to inspire young people about science and educating the wider community has never been more important.

"The Awardees are passionate about the need to be role models for school students and encourage them to think seriously about pursuing science in senior school, and into their tertiary education," Spathopoulos explains.

"They will also be given opportunities to empower teachers and enlighten the next generation about the diversity and rewards that come with a career in science," adds Spathopoulos. "Over the last year our outreach activities have engaged at least 70 schools, as well as over 1300 students and teachers across NSW, from Dubbo to Coffs Harbour and from Wollongong to metropolitan and outer Sydney."

In the ten years since The Tall Poppy Campaign began, numerous former Young Tall Poppy Science Award winners have continued to excel, winning more senior science awards, including Eureka Prizes, Prime Minister's Prizes for Science and NSW Scientist of the Year prizes.



2008 Young Tall Poppy Award Recipient and 2009 Eureka People's Choice award winner, Dr Kathy Belov, attributes some of her success this year to her involvement in the Tall Poppy Campaign. "The Campaign gave me fabulous opportunities to engage with school kids, teachers and the general public. I had fun visiting schools and the kids really got behind my research on Tasmanian Devils," said Dr Belov.

The NSW/ACT Young Tall Poppy Awards are supported by the NSW Government through Industry and Investment NSW's Office for Science and Medical Research as part of Science EXPOSEd. The NSW Tall Poppy Campaign is also supported by the University of NSW, Macquarie University and the NSW Department of Education and Training, with national support through the Department of Health and Ageing.

The 2009 NSW / ACT Young Tall Poppy Science Awards will be presented by NSW Minister for Science and Medical Research, the Honourable Jodi McKay MP. The UNSW Medal for the Young Tall Poppy Scientist of the Year in NSW will also be announced from among the winners on the night.

Media welcome to attend:

Thursday October 29

6.00pm – 7.30pm (Awards ceremony)

7.30pm – 8.30pm (Reception)

**Powerhouse Museum,
Harris St, Sydney**

To attend the Awards, more information, images or to arrange interviews or footage:

- Camille Thomson, NSW Campaign Manager – 0413 694 641 or (02) 9351 0818.

For further comment on the Tall Poppy Campaign:

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

LIST OF AWARD WINNERS ON FOLLOWING PAGE...

EMBARGOED: 2009 NSW / ACT Young Tall Poppy Science Award Winners

Dr Scott Byrne, University of Sydney Skin Cancer and the Immune System

The focus of Scott's research is on how sunlight suppresses the immune system, allowing cancers to develop.

Dr Kylie Catchpole, Australian National University Solar Electricity

Kylie investigates how light interacts with semiconductors, so that better, cheaper solar panels can be designed.

Dr Marcus Cole, University of New South Wales Organometallic Chemistry

Marcus conducts his research into two fields of molecular science: the methods for hydrogen storage for fuel/energy applications, and the discovery of applications for, and isolation of, heavy metals such as uranium

Dr Donna Green, University of New South Wales Climate Change Impacts and Risk

Donna's research on climate impacts in northern Australia is focused on remote indigenous communities.

Dr Mary Kavurma, University of New South Wales Atherosclerosis and Cardiovascular Disease

Mary's work is focused on understanding abnormal cell growth in arteries which is a major factor in the blockages during cardiovascular disease.

Dr Joshua Madin, Macquarie University Coral Reef Ecology and Biomechanics

Joshua's research looks at how storms and the waves they generate shape coral reef communities on the Great Barrier Reef.

Dr Penny Martens, University of New South Wales Biomaterials and Tissue Engineering

Penny develops polymers (plastics) that can be used to replace worn out, or defective body parts. Specifically, she looks at a class of polymers called hydrogels which are very similar to soft contact lenses.

Dr Matthew McCabe, University of New South Wales Hydrology

Matthew uses measurements from space based satellites, observations from ground-based instrumentation and modeling techniques to describe Earth's hydrological cycle.

Associate Professor Philip Morgan, University of Newcastle and Hunter Medical Research Institute

Obesity Prevention and Treatment

Philip's research focuses on the development and evaluation of programs to prevent and treat obesity across different settings and populations.

Dr Maria Nowotny, University of Western Sydney Photocatalytic Water Purification

Maria's work involves engineering and developing an efficient photocatalytic material for solar-driven water purification.

**Associate Professor Sebastien Perrier, University of Sydney
Macromolecular and Supramolecular Engineering**

Sebastien's research aims to develop techniques that provide structure and functionality control over polymers and enable the production of innovative polymeric materials with improved properties

**Dr James Rabeau, Macquarie University
Physics, Quantum, Optical and Materials**

James' research covers the fabrication, measurement and applications of nano-diamonds. These nano-diamonds can be used in a wide range of applications in science and technology such as encryption.

**Dr Julie Redfern, ANZAC Research Institute, Sydney
Cardiovascular disease prevention**

Julie's research aims to help patients who survive a heart event but who do not participate in an existing prevention program.

**Dr Nicholas Robins, Australian National University
Atomic Physics**

Nicholas' research is aimed at using Quantum Mechanics - the strange physics that governs the behaviour of atoms - to prototype new precision measurement devices that offer the promise of dramatically surpassing current technologies.

**Dr Timothy Schmidt, University of Sydney
Molecular Spectroscopy**

Timothy studies how molecules interact with light to provide a better understanding of various environments from interstellar space to new types of solar cells.

**Dr Michael Valenzuela, University of New South Wales
Regenerative Neuroscience**

Michael's work has shown that complex mental activity seems to protect the memory centre of our brain, the hippocampus, possibly reducing the likelihood of developing dementia and Alzheimer's later in life

**Dr David Warton, University of New South Wales
Ecological Statistics**

David harnesses new technologies to develop methods of data analysis to understand the biological world including new methods for allometry, used by scientists globally in projects as diverse as primate evolution, and plant physiology.

**Dr Kira Westaway, Macquarie University
Geochronology and Quaternary Science**

Kira uses bone evidence at archaeological sites to reconstruct and date the environments experienced by early humans to provide archaeologists with a better understanding of how our early ancestors lived and died.