TALL POPPY CAMPAIGN

Investing in Australia's Future

MEDIA RELEASE

2008 Young Tall Poppies of science announced

The thirteen winners of the prestigious 2008 Young Tall Poppy Science Awards for NSW and ACT will be announced on Thursday 23 October.

Can forest fungi help to combat climate change? How can ants help humans create planes that can navigate without pilots? How can researchers predict epidemics of HIV/AIDS and trends in 'ice' (methamphetamine) use in order to prevent them?

These are just some of the intriguing questions being explored by the 2008 Awardees. And this is what they'll spend the next year talking to school students about.

"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 win the opportunity to take their research to school students around NSW, ACT 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 eleventh 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 NSW/ACT Young Tall Poppy Awards are principally supported by the NSW Office for Science & Medical Research as part of Science EXPOSed. The NSW Tall Poppy Campaign is also supported by Macquarie University and the NSW Department of Education and Training, with national support through the Department of Health & Ageing.

The 2008 NSW / ACT Young Tall Poppy Science Awards will be presented by the Governor of NSW, Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO, and the NSW Minister for Science and Medical Research, the Hon Tony Stewart MP.

Media welcome to attend:

Thursday October 23
6.00pm – 7.00pm (Awards ceremony)
7.00pm – 8.30pm (Reception)
NSW Parliament House
Macquarie Street, Sydney

To attend the Awards, for more information or images:

- Camille Thomson, NSW Campaign Manager – (02) 9351 0818.

For further comment on the Tall Poppy Campaign:

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

2008 NSW / ACT Young Tall Poppy Science Award Winners:

- **Associate Professor Ian Anderson**, University of Western Sydney, who is studying the influence of CO_2 levels on the abundance of fungi and their capacity to enhance carbon sequestration in Australian forests. His work will help to improve carbon accounting for current and future emissions trading schemes.
- **Dr Kathy Belov**, University of Sydney, who studies immunity, health and disease in our native wildlife such as Tasmanian devils, wallabies, platypuses and koalas. She has found a direct link between loss of genetic diversity and the emergence of a new disease in the devils.
- **Dr Culum Brown**, Macquarie University, whose research aims to understand the evolution and development of fish behaviour and apply this to conservation and fisheries.
- **Professor Bryan Gaensler**, University of Sydney, who studies the static and crackle of the radio waves produced by stars and galaxies to study magnetic fields in the universe. He has received eight awards and fellowships including Young Australian of the Year (1999) and the NASA Long Term Space Astrophysics Award.
- **Associate Professor Rebecca Ivers**, The George Institute for International Health, who is conducting studies to measure injury in motor vehicle accidents and contributing to effective injury prevention programs, with a focus on young drivers.
- **Dr Rebecca McKetin**, University of New South Wales, who is researching the impact methamphetamine use on society and how to treat this addiction.
- **Dr Malcolm McLeod**, Australian National University, who is conducting research into the synthesis of organic molecules to solve real world problems such as treating drug resistant 'super bugs' and catching sports drug cheats.
- **Dr Ben McNeil**, University of New South Wales, whose research focuses on oceanic carbon dioxide uptake and developing better greenhouse gas emission and energy policies.
- **Dr Angela Moles**, University of New South Wales, whose research aims to understand the different ecological strategies that plants use when they grow in different environments.
- **Dr Ajay Narendra**, Australian National University, whose research aims to understand the mechanisms that aid decision making in the day-to-day life of animals, particularly ants. This understanding can be used in artificial intelligence projects like creating planes that can navigate without pilots.
- **Dr Peter Rutledge**, University of Sydney, whose research crosses many areas of chemistry including developing new antibiotics, building improved technologies for detecting pollutants and designing new catalysts.
- **Dr Pall Thordarson**, University of New South Wales, whose research interests are in developing new molecular devices and materials for applications in fields such as biosensing and tissue engineering.
- **Dr David Wilson**, University of New South Wales, who works on developing models to describe and forecast HIV/AIDS epidemics, providing insight into key drivers and impacts on society.