

TALL POPPY CAMPAIGN

Investing in Australia's Future

- MEDIA RELEASE -

Science for the next generation: Curing asthma, understanding the earth's plates and developing computers that think for themselves.

These are some of the topics that three of Australia's most prominent young scientists will be exploring on Tuesday when they visit Arthur Phillip High School to inspire students about careers in science.

Dr Douglas Aberdeen, Dr Alaina Ammit and Dr Nathan Daczko research artificial intelligence, asthma and geology, respectively. Recently awarded 'Young Tall Poppy Awards' by the Australian Institute of Policy and Science, these young scientists have embarked on an educational program in which they present their research to school students.

Dr Douglas Aberdeen develops methods to allow computers to 'learn' from experience. Known as Artificial Intelligence, or A.I., his work enables computers to do complex tasks like controlling robots, traffic lights and helicopters. He has worked on 'Hawkeye' systems for cricket and 'Bunyip' the world's cheapest super computer.

"Hearing about cutting edge scientific research from someone who is young and Australian shows young people that this is not the job of someone far away on television, there are real people working on this stuff here in Australia – and its fun!" he added.

Dr Alaina Ammit's research focuses on understanding how lungs get inflamed, at a cellular level, with implications for combatting asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (a group of diseases, including chronic bronchitis and emphysema, in which the airway is constricted).

"In Australia asthma affects 1 in 10 adults and 1 in 4 children. We need to do this basic research before we can develop good drugs with minimal side effects," explains Dr Ammit.

Dr Ammit is currently the Associate Dean in the Faculty of Pharmacy at the University of Sydney.

Dr Nathan Daczko's research focuses on the geology of the Earth's tectonic plates. "An understanding of plate boundary zones is critical to mitigating earthquakes and other hazards," he explains. Dr Daczko's research has also contributed to understandings of how these zones determine the formation and location of the mineral resources like coal, iron ore and uranium that are vital to Australia's current economic boom.

"Like most of my students, I didn't know much about geoscience when I was at school, but studying the Earth really captures students imaginations," says Dr Daczko.

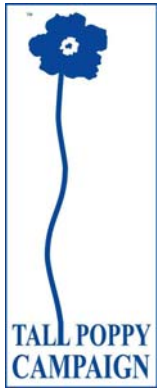
Now a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences at Macquarie University, he adds, "Geology is a very rare component of high school science, making

Founded by the Australian Institute of Policy and Science

PO Box 145, BALMAIN NSW 2041 Ph: +61 2 9810 5642 Fax: +61 2 9810 2406 email: info@aips.net.au Internet: www.tallpoppies.net.au

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sharing my passion for geoscience and research experiences very important to high school students”.

The school visits program is part of the Tall Poppy Campaign, a project of the Australian Institute of Policy and Science in partnership with the NSW Department of Education and Training, with sponsorship from the NSW Office for Science & Medical Research, which aims to highlight the work of Australia’s best young scientists and to inspire young Australians to see the relevance of science in today’s world.

“There is a shortage of young people entering and graduating degrees in the sciences - the excitement and professional and personal rewards of science are often not recognised in our society,” says Tall Poppy Campaign Director, Dorothy Davis.

“These school visits target year 10 and 11 students who are thinking seriously about their tertiary education and career choices,” Mrs Davis said.

“These Young Tall Poppy Scientists demonstrate to the next generation that a career in science in Australia can be exciting, rewarding and at the forefront of scientific developments worldwide” Mrs Davis added.

The Young Tall Poppy Scientists will visit Arthur Phillip High School (Smith Street, Parramatta) on Tuesday 24 July, from 8.40am – 11.30am.

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