As my first year serving as president of the MMSA draws to a close, I’m pleased to be able to take a little time to reflect. 2010 has been a successful year for the Foundation, with continued recovery in the world financial markets and excellent leadership from Chairman Sir Guy Green and the Board of Directors. Despite the withdrawal of the financial support of the British Government and financial constraints of the Menzies Trust in the UK, the Menzies Foundation has made a commitment to ensure the long term sustainability of the UK Menzies scholarships. The serious undertaking by the Foundation to focus on fundraising in the coming years opens an opportunity for members of the MMSA to give something back to the Foundation after all the support we have received. It was great to hear the willingness of the MMSA members to be involved in these plans when fundraising was discussed at the recent AGM.

The AGM was once again a very enjoyable day, and I extend my thanks to Rohan Hardcastle, John Pimanda, Tina Souvlis and Adrian McCallum for their fantastic presentations. The true diversity of the scholars was highlighted in very entertaining talks and I really enjoyed the growing sense of community that is now obvious when members of the MMSA get together.

Under Executive Director Prof John Mathews the Foundation has continued its work in the field of Indigenous Education, facilitating a workshop in July “Closing the Gap in Indigenous Education”. The report is available from menziesfoundation.org.au.

Scholarships have been awarded for 2010-11 to Leisa McCarthy, Sheree Nix, David Sutanto, Jane Taylor and Dr Daniel Worthley; Fellowships to Dr Gregory Keane and Dr Lakshmi Nayana Vootakuru; and the Menzies Centenary Prize to Jessie Hutchinson. I congratulate
Young Tall Poppy Science Awards

Congratulations to Dr Anina Rich who was named among the best and brightest young scientists at the prestigious 2010 Young Tall Poppy Science Awards for NSW. The Awards recognise early career researchers who have achieved significant scientific milestones and have demonstrated their willingness and ability to engage people in science.

Anina was one of 10 finalists to receive an award. In addition to their research, the finalists were selected for their ability to promote science in the community and inspire the next generation of young scientists.

Based in the Centre for Cognitive Science, Anina focuses on two aspects of attention – balancing competing internal and external demands and how attention is involved in integrating information from different senses.

The scientists will share their knowledge and promote science across Australia with school students, teachers and the broader community as part of the Tall Poppy Science campaign run by the Australian Institute of Policy and Science.

Report from the Secretary/Treasurer:

After a highly successful MMSA AGM in 2009, it was encouraging to note the attendance at the 2010 AGM. Ten alumni were admitted to full membership and four current scholars to associate membership. Congratulations and welcome to all.

The finances of the MMSA are reasonably healthy at $34,526. I wish to highlight two very significant individual donations made by Scholars and thank them for their continued generosity and support. However, donations received for the Menzies Centenary Prize, Dimboola continue to lag behind the MMSA’s funding commitment to the $10,000 award. It was therefore decided to maintain the MCP as a standing item for review, and to flag the probability that the annual suggested donation be raised to at least reflect inflation.

The Foundation is considering incorporating new media through the Foundation web site and the MMSA will be investigating setting up a Facebook page for Scholars only. If you have any thoughts on this matter, please contact either Marie or myself through the Foundation Secretariat.

NHMRC EXCELLENCE AWARDS DEMONSTRATE AUSTRALIA’S STRENGTH IN HEALTH AND MEDICAL RESEARCH

The calibre and depth of health and medical research in Australia was demonstrated at the National Health and Medical Research Council’s (NHMRC) Excellence Awards in Canberra on 15 December. The awards recognise the scientific merit, innovation and the research success of 10 of Australia’s leading health and medical researchers.

“These award winners are outstanding researchers. As the highest ranking applicants in their funding schemes, these 10 researchers have been assessed by their peers as meeting the highest national and international standards for their research,” Professor Warwick Anderson, Chief Executive Officer of the NHMRC said.

“They have been identified as the top 10 of the nearly 5,000 researchers that applied for NHMRC funding in 2010. They are the top ten researchers in the 24% of applicants that were successful in receiving NHMRC funding.”

Professor Michael Good, Chair of the NHMRC Council said that it is important that their achievements are recognised by all Australians, who will benefit from the results of this research.

“Australia will have, through the ongoing contribution of these world-class researchers, a self improving health system.”

“We want to ensure that Australia’s health and medical research workforce continues to conduct high quality, ethical research that can respond to our health needs in the 21st century,” he said.

NHMRC Achievement Award for Top Ranked NHMRC Research Fellow:

Professor Paul Hodges, University of Queensland

Professor Paul Hodges is Director of the NHMRC Centre for Clinical Research Excellence in Spinal Pain, Injury and Health. He has doctorates in physiotherapy and neuroscience and uses this mix of skills to bridge between basic neurophysiological and clinical research. His work aims to understand mechanisms underpinning chronic pain and to develop conservative treatments.

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Menzies Scholarships in Engineering and Law awarded

The Foundation congratulates the recipients of the Sir Robert Menzies Memorial Scholarships in Engineering and in Law for 2011. The post-graduate scholarships are offered to Australians for tenure at universities in the United Kingdom.

Mr David Sutanto was the successful candidate in Engineering after four applicants were interviewed by the Selection Committee of Professor Graham Hutchinson, Chairman (Professor of Civil Engineering, The University of Melbourne), Dr Andrew Whiting (previous Menzies Scholar) and Ms Jessica Howell (representing DEEWR Australian Education International). The Foundation’s Executive Director, Professor John Mathews, and General Manager, Ms Sandra Mackenzie, were also in attendance.

David holds the degrees of Bachelor of Arts (majoring in Planning and Design) and Bachelor of Engineering (Civil Engineering) from The University of Melbourne with First Class Honours (2008).

David will undertake a MSc in Transport at Imperial College London for one year commencing in October 2011.

The scholarship in Engineering is offered by the Menzies Foundation in co-operation with the Sir Robert Menzies Memorial Trust (UK) and the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR).

The scholarship in law is offered by the Sir Robert Menzies Memorial Trust (UK) with the financial support of the Australian Government DEEWR and of the Menzies Foundation in Australia.

Seven candidates were interviewed at Clarendon Terrace in October for the single scholarship in Law available for 2011.

The Selection Committee members were the Hon Sir Guy Green (Chairman), Mr Mark Darian-Smith (Mallesons Stephen Jaques, Sydney), Justice Susan Kenny (Federal Court of Australia), Professor Andrew Kenyon (University of Melbourne) and Ms Vanessa Tulenew (representing DEEWR). Mr Darian-Smith, Justice Kenny and Professor Kenyon are all previous recipients of the Menzies Scholarship. Also in attendance were Professor John Mathews and Ms Sandra Mackenzie.

The Menzies Scholarship in Law for 2011 was awarded to Ms Jane Taylor. Jane holds the degrees of LLB with First Class Honours and the University Medal (2009) and BA with First Class Honours and the University Medal (2007) from the University of Sydney where she was placed 1:281 in her graduating class.

Jane will undertake the BCL/MPhil at the University of Oxford commencing in October 2011 for two years.

The Engineers Australia connection

Representatives from Engineers Australia were guests at this year’s Annual Awards Dinner. The Victoria Division President Mr David Eltringham and Executive Director Ms Glenda Graham are pictured with the Menzies Engineering Scholar for 2011, Mr David Sutanto left and the 2007 scholar, Mr Adrian McCallum right following presentation of their Menzies Meszaros Medallions at Clarendon Terrace.

(Continued from page 1)

and welcome them into the Menzies fold. I would also like to thank all the past Scholars who now serve on the selection committees for these awards.

The Menzies Brief, has kept us informed as to the happenings of the Foundation, Scholars and Alumni and a big thank you to Liisa Laakso for working with the Secretariat to produce such a professional newsletter. I would also like to thank Pam Shearman and Sandra Mackenzie for their help in ensuring the MMSA continues to run smoothly, not only with the Brief but with organizing the AGM and making sure we all stay in contact with one another.

I look forward to leading you all for another year and hope the MMSA can continue to grow as a cohesive group benefiting from our diverse backgrounds and shared experiences.

Wishing you all a safe and happy Christmas and New Year.

Marie Estcourt, MMSA President
At the MMSA afternoon ...

Scholars and alumni were joined by members of the Board, Council and guests to listen to the MMSA presentations by scholars.
Presentations by Scholars at the MMSA meeting

Four previous and current Scholars gave presentations after the MMSA AGM, Dr Rohan Hardcastle (Law), Dr John Pimanda (Medicine), Dr Tina Souvlis (Allied Health) and Adrian McCallum (Engineering).

Rohan Hardcastle gave a presentation on his doctoral research that has been published in a book titled “Law and the Human Body: Property Rights, Ownership and Control”. The research considered what property and privacy rights exist over body parts that have been taken from the deceased and living persons. Rohan explained that advances in science and the development of genetic databases have added an aura of modern controversy to this long-standing and, as yet, unresolved problem. In particular, English and Australian law governing separated human tissue (including body parts and cell-lines) is unsatisfactory. It remains uncertain what property rights living persons can claim over their separated human tissue.

Dr Tina Souvlis presented information regarding the Health Practitioner research agenda in Queensland Health. Dr Souvlis is the Manager of Research Development in the Allied Health Clinical Education and Training Unit of Clinical Education Queensland.

Tina summarized the new structures for Allied Health clinical research in Queensland Health, the disciplines involved, the funding opportunities, and the new research personnel that have been recruited, many with university partnerships. Research capacity in Queensland Health is significantly strengthened by the new structures and resources but Tina also discussed the challenges for coordinating and implementing changes, evaluating the outcomes and ensuring the translation of findings to the workplace. One of the responsibilities of Tina’s position is to develop a career structure to direct the progression from clinician to independent researchers.

Dr John Pimanda dazzled many in the audience with a wonderful summary of recent advances in the molecular genetics of blood development. He showed that studies of the embryo can help to explain what goes wrong in leukaemia. He illustrated the complex networks that regulate the expression of blood-forming genes, whereby RNA transcripts of some genes regulate the rate of production of blood proteins by other genes. He explained that the cancer-causing ERG gene, an oncogene, gets switched-on in human T-cell lymphoblastic leukaemia through the activity of other oncogenes, some of which are themselves activated by random mutations. Through such exciting research, John Pimanda and others will gain the many new insights needed for more effective treatment of leukaemia and other diseases of blood.

Adrian McCallum will soon complete his PhD at the Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge. His investigation of snow strength, highlighted in the previous issue of the Brief, had in part been conducted in the Antarctic. Adrian worked there as a tractor driver, the ‘real’ job that secured his place at the base. Adrian informed and entertained as he described the task ahead of towing 200 tonne modules 15k inland from the seaward drifting ice shelf on which they sit and the nightmare an extraction would be should a module get bogged on the snow ‘road’ to the new base. Some interesting questions on climate change followed his presentation.
Even before Sir Guy Green welcomed the Scholars and guests of the Foundation to Clarendon Terrace for the annual MMSA Dinner, the room was abuzz, setting the tone for a very convivial occasion.

Dr Marie Estcourt, as MC, took special pleasure in introducing Ms Sandra Mackenzie, who spoke with warmth and humour about her thirty years of stewardship with the Foundation, her fond recollections of working with the late Dr Eric Wigglesworth, and the bonds she has formed with the many Menzies Scholars over the years.

Mrs Heather Henderson, representing the Menzies family, congratulated Sandra on her heartfelt speech, and her outstanding contributions to the Foundation. Mrs Henderson presented the Menzies Meszaros medallions to scholars Ms Jane McCormack and Ms Sheree Nix (Allied Health Sciences), Mr Adrian McCallum and Mr David Sutanto (Engineering), Ms Jane Taylor (Law) and to Ms Jessie Hutchinson, the Menzies Centenary Prize winner.

The Hon Dame Margaret Guilfoyle rounded off the formal part of the evening with a vote of thanks to Mrs Henderson.

The evening was enjoyed by all the scholars, directors and friends of the Foundation attending, and by special guest The Hon Kay Patterson and representatives of the Brockhoff Foundation and Engineering Australia.


Not surprisingly people often ask me, how could you possibly work for one organisation for 30 years? Quite simply, there can be nothing more exciting and involving than being part of an organisation as it grows and develops from its very beginning.

One early initiative was the creation of the Menzies scholarship program, to be at the highest level and equal in value to the Rhodes. A Menzies scholarship has now been awarded to recipients from every State and Territory in Australia and 54% have been awarded to women.

Menzies Scholarships have been awarded to scholars of the highest calibre which also requires a selection panel at the highest level. For example, the selection panel for the Menzies Scholarship in Law, under the chairmanship of Sir Guy Green, includes a member of the judiciary, a senior corporate lawyer and a senior academic. This year all three positions were filled by previous Menzies Scholars - Susan Kenny, Justice of the Federal Court, Mark Darian-Smith, Senior Partner with Mallesons, Sydney and Prof Andrew Kenyon, Deputy Dean of Law at the University of Melbourne.

The question now is, how do we sustain the scholarship program well into the future? Our first task is to create more awareness of what we have been quietly achieving for over 30 years - and that is where the Menzies Scholars will have a vital role to play.

We have an impressive alumni and a record of achievement that I have been very proud to be associated with. Now is the time for us all to let the wider community know what the Menzies Foundation is capable of so that we can continue to identify and support the future generations of Menzies Scholars.
Spotlight on Dr Liisa Laakso

As a new addition to the Brief, we will attempt to get to know Scholars a little better via a Q&A section. To get the ball rolling, Dr Liisa Laakso (MMSA Secretary/Treasurer, AHS 1991) provides some personal insights.

What is your job? I am a physiotherapy academic, currently Convenor of Physiotherapy and Deputy Head of School of Physiotherapy and Exercise Science at Griffith University (Gold Coast campus).

What is the best/worst part of your job? I enjoy working with fantastic colleagues, and the fact that I can play a significant role in the lives and developmental years of budding health care professionals. I also enjoy the fact that I can to some extent shape the way that the physiotherapy profession itself is developing through my various activities including membership of committees, and my teaching and research. This means that I always have something to do. The best part is also related to the worst part...with so much to do I have little time for myself.

What are you reading currently? At home, I tend to multi-task when it comes to reading. I’ve just finished Peter Høeg’s book “Miss Smilla’s Feeling for Snow” which took ages to read because I’ve also been reading Val McDermid’s “Trick of the Dark” and Prof Bob Baxt’s “Duties and Responsibilities of Directors and Officers”! At work, I have piles of materials of which I try to keep abreast. I am on a number of professional committees and organisations, and it’s an ongoing challenge to keep up-to-date with all of the reading required.

What is your favourite food? I love to go out to eat but rarely have time. When I do, my culinary tastes are fairly eclectic and range from Chinese yum cha, to hearty Indian curries, to authentic Italian pizza, to modern Australian cuisine, to a good old seafood buffet. Food goes with wine, so I can’t answer this question without including my pleasure for imbibing on an excellent Coonawarra shiraz or a cool climate pinot grigio.

What is your favourite film? The classic musical “The Sound of Music” which is enjoying its 40th anniversary in 2010, closely followed by “The Shawshank Redemption”.

What do you do to relax/unwind? I catch up on news and current affairs... I can’t do without my iPad! If I can find the time, I enjoy playing lawn bowls.

How has the Menzies Scholarship helped you? Scholarship in Allied Health Sciences, I doubt that I would have been able to complete my PhD which I did as a clinician (rather than as an academic which was more typical for physiotherapy at the time). Without a PhD my career in academia would have been less likely.

Menzies Centenary Prize Winner

The Menzies Centenary Prize of $10,000 is awarded to a Year 12 student from the Dimboola Memorial Secondary College as a contribution to the cost of the first two years of tertiary study.

The winner of the 2010 Menzies Centenary Prize is Jessie Hutchinson who gained an impressive ENTER score and was Dux of the College in 2009. She was also the recipient of many school prizes and is a worthy beneficiary of the award. Jessie will commence a Bachelor of Occupational Therapy degree at the University of Ballarat in 2011.

News from the UK

The Annual Menzies Scholars’ Dinner was held in the Downer Room at Australia House, London in November. Current scholars and Alumni enjoyed a great evening in a somewhat chilly Downer Room, where the heating was causing a few problems. Mr Sebastian Hartford-Davis responded to the toast to the Scholars proposed by Professor Carl Bridge of the Menzies Centre for Australian Studies, London.

Aparno Rao, Richard Link and Patrick Ky

Rohan Shekhar and Michael Whalley, Chairman of the UK Menzies Trust

Menzies Memorial Scholars Association

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