From the President

An excellent occasion.... It’s just wonderful to be a part of.... Such diversity of interests.... I’ll definitely be back next year....

Some of the thoughts expressed by Scholars and invited guests at the MMSA AGM and Annual presentations. It certainly makes you feel proud to be a part of a select group of Australians who have benefited so richly from the Menzies Foundation munificence. And, more importantly, a collective of intelligent, driven and talented individuals with the shared ideals of excellence, achievement and contributing to the health, wealth and progress of our nation and its people.

This edition of The Brief brings a report from AHS Scholar Simone O’Shea, regarding her trip to Dimboola to present the Menzies Centenary Prize to a most worthy young recipient, Joshuah Wren. My thanks to Simone for undertaking the journey especially as she is expecting a new addition to her family in the near future. It sounds like Simone had a tremendous time, so I’d urge others to consider volunteering for the role of Foundation and MMSA representative on future occasions.

Congratulations to all of the new Menzies Scholars. We look forward to hearing of your progress and tracking your successes in the future. Thank you to the Scholars who gave presentations at the Annual meeting on their research and other scholarship endeavours. Immediate Past President Marie Estcourt provides a comprehensive summary of those presentations in this edition.

Finally, there is a report on the outcomes of the MMSA AGM, where Scholars moved a vote of thanks for the dedication shown by Marie Estcourt to her roles, first as Secretary/Treasurer and more recently as President of the MMSA. I wish to acknowledge and thank Dr Estcourt on behalf of the Scholars for all of her work,

From the Secretary

It is a great honour to assume the mantle of Secretary of the MMSA. I look forward to continuing my predecessors’ tradition of helping to keep scholars connected and involved in the important work of the Foundation.

As I myself have become more involved over the past year, the vision, passion and extraordinary level of commitment displayed by all those responsible for running the Foundation has really struck me. Above all, it has become very apparent how vitally important the scholarship program is to the Foundation and also how current and past scholars’ contributions have helped to further enrich the Foundation.

We have a lot to learn and gain from each other, regardless of the discipline we have pursued or the year in which we were lucky enough to receive our respective scholarships. The Menzies Brief provides an important conduit of information amongst scholars, which enables us to more clearly see how the Foundation is changing lives. The MMSA AGM, scholars’ presentations and the annual dinner also present us with good opportunities to stay in touch.

I hope to connect with each of you through at least one of these ways in the coming years. In the meantime, I wish you and your families all the very best for 2012.

Dariel De Sousa
Incoming Secretary/Treasurer, MMSA

2012 DIARY DATE:
MMSA Annual Meeting
Thursday, 29 November 2012
and particularly her personal touch with Scholars and her shepherding of the transition to Facebook now being utilised more frequently by the MMSA. The era of electronic communications is extending to our use of Twitter and so I hope that you’ll join me and Marie in promoting the use of these tools for MMSA communications.

As incoming President, I welcome Dariel De Sousa who now takes on the role of Secretary/Treasurer. I look forward to working with Dariel over the next two years. It’s important that Scholars from the diversity of scholarship domains step forward to provide input and guidance to the work of the MMSA and through it, of the Foundation. Our diversity is the Foundation’s strength. Our collective knowledge and expertise is the Foundation’s future. Our collective wisdom underscores the Foundation’s philosophy of being a catalyst for achievement. As we grow and mature as an Association, we have the opportunity to contribute meaningfully through the MMSA and the Foundation to a variety of initiatives that support achievement. I hope to bring you more news about such initiatives in future editions of The Brief.

In the meantime, if you have news of your own achievements, please feel free to share those with the Foundation Secretariat and with Scholars... It’s great to hear what colleagues are up to, and part of the benefits of the MMSA network. Best wishes to all for 2012.

Assoc Prof Liisa Laakso
Incoming MMSA President

Report from MMSA AGM

Scholars will have received by now, a copy of the Minutes from the MMSA AGM. Apart from other matters mentioned elsewhere in The Brief, a few other highlights were as follows:

It was encouraging to note the signs of continued interest in the Association reflected in the attendance and also the list of apologies received. Thank you to all.


The Foundation supports a range of initiatives each year, and one of those is sponsorship of a named Menzies lecture, presentation or workshop at a major international conference. In 2012, the Foundation has undertaken to sponsor a Keynote Plenary session regarding the management of pain using laser therapy, as part of the 9th International Congress of the World Association for Laser Therapy. The conference will be held on the Gold Coast in late September, 2012.

Proposals from Scholars are welcome for consideration of support in 2013. To apply for the $5,000 grant send a 1-page proposal to the Menzies Foundation Secretariat at menzies@vicnet.net.au.

MENZIES CENTENARY PRIZE

Congratulations to Joshuah Wren, winner of the Menzies Centenary Prize for 2011. The prize of $10,000 towards tertiary study, is awarded to a Year 12 student from Dimboola Memorial Secondary College. Joshuah is studying for a Bachelor of Commerce degree at the University of Melbourne.

Although the primary criterion is academic achievement, Joshuah also made an outstanding contribution to the life of the College. He earned college Honours, Effort and Contribution Certificates in each year from 2005 to 2009.

The Menzies Centenary Prize was initiated in 1994 to mark the centenary of Sir Robert Menzies’ birth in Jeparit. It is jointly funded by the Foundation, the Menzies Memorial Scholars Association.

Ms Diana Menzies presents Dr Misty Jenkins with the Menzies Medallion. Misty recently returned from Cambridge to complete the last two years of her Menzies Fellowship at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre in Melbourne.
Menzies Memorial Scholarships awarded

ALLIED HEALTH SCIENCES

Valued at $27,500 per annum for each of two years, this research scholarship is open to graduates in any of the health sciences who have completed the first stage of their doctoral program in an Australian University.

The Foundation is grateful for the support of the final selection committee and the assessors who are nominated by the respective disciplines to grade the applications in terms of topic, relevance and methodology.

Four of the 23 applicants were interviewed at Clarendon Terrace in August. The interview panel was chaired by Prof John Mathews and consisted of Prof Simon Crowe (La Trobe University), Dr Liisa Laakso (Griffith University and a previous Menzies Scholar), Prof Meg Morris (University of Melbourne) and Prof Alison Perry (La Trobe University).

The two scholarships in the Allied Health Sciences for 2012-2013 have been awarded to Ms Jane Galvin and Mr Matthew Pase.

Jane Galvin holds a Master of Occupational Therapy (2007) and BAppSc (OT) (1991) from La Trobe University.

Jane is Senior Occupational Therapist at the Victorian Paediatric Rehabilitation Service, Royal Children’s Hospital, Melbourne. Her PhD project at the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute is studying the possibility of using virtual reality for the rehabilitation of arm movements in children following traumatic brain injury.

Matthew Pase holds a BA (Psychology) with First Class Honours (2009) and a BSc (Psychology and Psychophysiology) (2008) from Swinburne University of Technology.

A tutor in psychology at Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne, Matthew’s PhD will look at whether diet can counter the slowing of brain function with age.

ENGINEERING

The Engineering scholarship to the United Kingdom is for one, two or three academic years. Four candidates were interviewed in September by the Selection Committee, chaired by Prof Graham Hutchinson (Civil Engineering, University of Melbourne). Committee members were Mr Peter Bowtell (Arup), Mr Mark Snowden (representing DEEWR) and Dr Andrew Whiting (Aurecon and a previous Menzies Scholar). The Foundation is grateful for their support.

The Menzies Scholarships in Engineering for 2012 were awarded to Ms Brittany Coff and Mr Anant Tayal.

Brittany holds a BEng (Civil & Structural) with First Class Honours and the University Medal from the University of Adelaide (2008).

A water resources engineer with Sinclair Knight Merz in Adelaide, Brittany will go to Cambridge University to undertake an MPhil in Sustainable Development.

Anant (Dev) holds a BEng (Electrical) with First Class Honours and BComm (Finance and Investment) from the University of Western Australia (2008).

An electrical engineer from Perth now employed by Energy Australia in Sydney, Dev will also study for an MPhil in Sustainable Development at Cambridge for one year.

LAW

There were 33 applications for the single law scholarship to the United Kingdom available this year. Seven candidates were interviewed in October by the Selection Committee which was chaired by the Foundation’s Chairman, Sir Guy Green. Members of the Committee were Mr Brian Doyle (Deputy Chairman, Menzies Foundation), Prof Andrew Kenyon (Deputy Dean of Law, University of Melbourne and previous Menzies Scholar), Ms Dariel De Sousa (Maddocks and previous Menzies Scholar) and Ms Vanessa Tulenew (representing DEEWR). The Foundation thanks the assessment panel and Committee for their support.

The Menzies Scholarship in Law for 2012 was awarded to Miss Eleanor Mitchell.

Eleanor holds the degrees of LLB with First Class Honours and the University Medal (2009) and a BA (Politics) (2008) from the University of Adelaide.

Eleanor is from Adelaide and currently Associate to Justice Jayne Jagot of the Federal Court. She will undertake the one year Bachelor of Civil Law at Oxford University commencing in October 2012.

See profiles of each of the 2011 award recipients at: http://www.scienceinpublic.com.au/menzies/menziesbackground
Destination Dimboola

Halfway between Melbourne and Adelaide, in the heart of the Wimmera - a region synonymous with mallee scrub, and flat open plains populated by more grain silos than people - you will find Dimboola.

Dimboola, 34kms from the small town of Jeparit, the birth place of Sir Robert Menzies, holds a special standing with the Menzies Foundation. In 1994, to commemorate the centenary of Sir Robert’s birth, the Menzies Centenary Prize was developed to provide the most outstanding student at Dimboola Memorial Secondary College (the closest high school to Jeparit) with a financial ‘kick-start’ towards their tertiary studies ... a “catalyst for (further) achievement”.

And so on 20th December 2011, I drove into Dimboola (a town I had driven through or past on many occasions on journeys between Melbourne and ‘the West’ without cause to stop) to uphold the tradition of former Menzies Scholars presenting the Menzies Centenary Prize at the Dimboola Memorial Secondary College annual awards night.

As a representative of the Menzies Foundation and the Menzies Memorial Scholars Association, I wanted to learn more about the area and Sir Robert’s history within the region. Therefore, the first place on my list was a trip to Jeparit. With a population of less than 600 people (of whom I only saw about 5), Jeparit was proud of its “favourite son”, honouring his connection to the town through sites such as the Menzies Spire and Menzies Square which was located on the site of the family home and next to the family owned store.

Next stop was Dimboola Memorial Secondary College (DMSC) which stands proud on top of a gentle rise overlooking the town. Originally erected as a memorial to those who fought in WW1, it was transformed into a school in 1924 but still remains the site of the town’s war memorial and ANZAC day celebrations. The grand sweeping driveway into and out of the school is a memorial avenue of trees.

With a student body of approximately 180, the school is an important place for adolescents in the region. Whilst touring the school and its facilities, several things were clearly evident. Despite many of the school buildings being in need of renovation/update, the general vibe within the school felt dynamic and innovative, with the energy coming from a very enthusiastic and passionate team of staff led by the school principal, Robert Pyers. Many of the innovations and developments provided living examples of how the school motto, Facta non Verba (by deeds not words), was embodied within the school community. Two striking examples of innovation were the nearly completed Science & Language Centre, and the Health & Fitness Centre, which would provide facilities and exciting new opportunities and methods for student learning. These developments were undertaken with a broader view of strengthening the Dimboola community (and Wimmera region) as a whole by providing additional facilities (such as the state of the art sporting facilities) and links with the school (which sees itself as a vital organ in the lifeblood and future of the town). I felt that students of DMSC were lucky to be in such a dynamic and supportive environment providing state of the art education despite some of the tyrannies of distance. They demonstrated that success and achievement can occur anywhere. I have no doubt that DMSC is a place they will look back on fondly and proudly in the future, and recognise that it prepared them well for their own life adventure.

The real reason I was in Dimboola was for the DMSC awards night. I felt very privileged and honoured to be a guest of the school, and their reception of me demonstrated how strongly they value the connection with the Menzies Foundation. Despite standing out in the crowd in my striking red academic robes, it was fantastic to be able to represent the Menzies Foundation and MMSA and formally honour the 2011 Menzies Centenary Prize winner, Joshuah Wren, in front of his own community.

I extend my thanks to the whole DMSC community for making me feel so welcome and an important part of the awards night (it was definitely my first and probably only experience of being a VIP!). Special thanks must also be made to Sue Bell (DMSC staff member and mother of former Centenary Prize winners Joshua and Chloe Bell), who ensured that every aspect of my stay in Dimboola was thoroughly enjoyable and every need met; Jeannette Walsgott (DMSC staff member and resident) for giving up her time to provide me with excellent, thorough and extremely enjoyable tours of DMSC and the town of Dimboola which gave me an insight into the soul of the school and town; and to DMSC Principal Robert Pyers for taking the time to provide his current and future visions for the school and allowing me to tour the new facilities.

Joshuah Wren and Simone O’Shea

Simone O’Shea (AHS 2004)
It was a pleasure to find myself at Clarendon Terrace for the 21st MMSA AGM on November 24 for my last meeting as President. The meeting was well attended with 26 past and current scholars attending. At the conclusion of the official part of the meeting, Liisa Laakso was elected President and Dariel De Sousa took on the role of Secretary/Treasurer.

We were fortunate to have 4 fantastic speakers present their work for us. I’d like to thank the speakers for preparing such engaging and fascinating talks, highlighting the talent and diversity of the MMSA alumni. Special mention must go to Dan Siskind who stepped in literally at an hour’s notice to give a highly polished and entertaining talk.

The first speaker was Dr Jaci Barrett (AHS, 2006), who spoke about some of the work she did during her PhD. Jaci told us about the low FODMAP diet and its potential benefits for those who suffer from Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS). FODMAP stands for Fermentable Oligo-, Di-, Mono-saccharides And Polyols, these small sugars, such as fructose, fructans and galactans are thought to be triggers for sufferers of IBS.

Jaci’s work tested the hypothesis that these molecules, due to their small size, were malabsorbed as they moved rapidly through the digestive system and led to increased water entering the lower colon. Utilising a cohort of ileostomates, Jaci tested the impact of FODMAPs in the diet on effluent output and showed a significant increase in the amount of waste and its water content by those on the high FODMAP diet.

Interestingly Jaci observed that FODMAPs would have the same impact on all people who eat them, however the presence of FODMAPs in the lower bowel and increased water leads to pain and discomfort in IBS patients only.

We next heard from Dr Josie Barbaro, (AHS 2006). She spoke on her PhD work involving the development of a highly significant test for the prospective identification of autism in infancy. Josie clearly explained the symptoms and impact autism has, and also the high prevalence of autism in the community. She highlighted the importance of early detection of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and explained that often the diagnosis is made far too late due to a lack of understanding of the early indicators of the disorder.

Josie spoke about her work on the Social Attention and Communication Study (SACS). The system aims.../continued on page 7
At the MMSA afternoon …

Following the AGM, alumni enjoyed the opportunity to talk, meet the new scholars and speak with guests and Menzies Foundation Board and Council members who were invited to listen to the four afternoon presentations.

Eleanor Mitchell and Marie Estcourt

John Pimanda and Brittany Coff

Justin Hogan-Doran and Alexandra West

Stan Guilfoyle, John Coghlan, Tom Hurley and Dame Margaret Guilfoyle

Matthew Pase and Dev Tayal

Misty Jenkins and Deb Walsh

Jennifer Fleming and Anne-Marie Hill

Jane Galvin, Brittany Coff, Dev Tayal, Sir Daryl Dawson, Eleanor Mitchell, Sheree Nix and Leanne Hall
to identify infants at risk of ASD through monitoring during their normal maternal and child health meetings. The study enrolled over 20,000 children and the trained health nurses were taught to identify a set of behaviors, such as making eye contact and sharing experiences, which can differentiate between infants with and without ASD before the age of 2. Children identified as at risk were referred for further assessment, and the testing was shown to be highly predictive with 80% of children referred officially assessed as having ASD. Josie has now traveled overseas due to the success of her work and the testing is being adapted for use in other countries.

The third speaker was Dr Misty Jenkins (Medicine, 2008) pictured below, who talked about her experiences working at Cambridge University in the UK. Misty’s work focused on increasing understanding about the mechanisms CD8 T cells, one of the major cells of the immune system, use to identify and kill cells. CD8 T cells are responsible for finding and killing cells in the body that are infected with viruses and also cells which are no longer ‘normal’ such as cancer cells. Misty showed some fantastic video footage of CD8 T cells identifying and killing cancer cells. The graphic footage of the CD8 T cells finding the cells and rapidly delivering their killer packages of proteins highlighted the dramatic way in which these cells keep our bodies functioning.

Misty also spoke about her work while in the UK in assisting in the establishment of the Charlie Perkins...
The 2011 invited speaker at the Annual Dinner was Assoc/Professor David Morgan, OAM, the Menzies Memorial Scholar in Medicine in 1985.

A Brisbane orthopaedic surgeon, David was a prime mover behind the establishment of the Queensland Bone Bank — the largest and one of the most advanced facilities of its kind — which provides musculo-skeletal tissues to thousands of Australians each year.

The Menzies Scholarship allowed him to spend two years in Oxford while he obtained higher degrees in surgery. “I developed a special interest in hip and knee surgery and, more importantly, was grounded in the foundations of bone and tissues banking and transplantation. That seed blossomed into the current Bone Bank.”

David is Clinical Associate Professor within the Department of Surgery at the University of Queensland and has research links with the Queensland University of Technology and the Department of Human Movements at the University of Queensland. He lectures internationally in both primary and revision hip and knee replacement surgery.

His association with the Menzies Memorial Scholars Association dates back to 1988 when he became the inaugural President.

As after dinner speaker, David spoke engagingly about the lessons he has learned as a clinician and how these could be used potentially to guide the work of the MMSA. In particular, David’s themes were about resilience, planning and taking opportunities when they arise.

It was great to see David Morgan back at Clarendon Terrace.

Liisa Laakso