
Foreword

In the final issue of *Science Review* for the year we have two pertinent commentaries on the New Zealand RS&T sector, the announcement of this year's Association medallists, the reports tabled at the 2009 AGM and the NZAS's submission to the National-led government's recently released New Zealand's Research, and Technology Priorities feedback document, and finally the response to an invitation to comment from the chair of the government-appointed taskforce charged with reviewing the Crown research institutes.

In his paper, *Could transforming science transform New Zealand?* Professor Sir Peter Gluckman, the prime minister's chief science advisor, overviews the RS&T sector, ponders on how publicly funded science should be undertaken in a small country, the balance in funding incentives needed, and how research priorities are set. He also comments on the greater need for scientific evidence in policy development, the importance of knowledge transfer between science and the public, and the cultural differences between science and business which may impede this transfer. Sir Peter emphasises that science is not a luxury — it is core to advancing the public good and the economic and environmental health of New Zealand. He points out that while New Zealand is not a rich nation, it is a clever one, and that we need to look at how we invest in science and exploit it so that it can become a richer one.

Garth Carnaby, of G.A. Carnaby and Associates, provides a personal perspective on evaluating the structure of the New Zealand science system. In his essay *The New Zealand Science System – An approach to evaluating the structure*, Garth asks the following questions, 'What is the value proposition for public investment in science?', 'What proportion of public funding should be allocated to which activity?', and 'How efficient is the process for the allocating the funding?'. He flags, however, that in discussing these issues scientists tend to talk at cross purposes, primarily because they try to hold the discussion whilst assuming that they share a common view of what research actually is.

In an attempt to establish such common ground, Garth sets out what constitutes research excellence, and hypothesises that there are multiple dimensions of excellence in the fields of RS&T and that these various forms are all necessary components of a balanced science system. He explores this hypothesis and, in doing so, suggests criteria for each dimension. Once this is done, and via the questions posed above, Garth evaluates the system and makes a number of suggestions for improvement.

The government is currently setting priorities for research, science and technology and in October sought feedback on its proposed investment structure, the balance between investment areas, and the areas in which it is proposed research platforms might be established. The aim of this priority setting is to help meet the goal of increasing the contribution RS&T makes to improved economic performance.

In this context government is considering two other issues. These are:

- How the CRI model can operate more effectively to support New Zealand's development. To this end a Taskforce was set up in late October and is to report to the Ministers of Finance and RS&T as shareholding Ministers.
- Ways to improve and encourage business R&D and how research organisations such as universities and CRIs can work more closely with business.

Given the strong links between these streams of work, the government is looking to make decisions in all three areas in December.

The Association's submission on the priority setting document and response to the invitation to comment from the chair of the CRI Taskforce are shown on pages 136–144.

The AGM and Annual Awards

The Association's AGM was held on Tuesday 2 November in Wellington, with reports received from out-going president Kate McGrath, the editorial committee, and the other subcommittee chairs. James Renwick, Principal Scientist, Climate Variability & Change at NIWA was elected president, with Edward Adams, Paul Gandar and Justin Hodgkiss joining NZAS Council. Stepping down from Council were Dennis Gordon, George Jones, Vanessa Sherlock and Ross Moore. In recognition of his long-standing service to the Association, Ross Moore was appointed an Honorary Member. The NZAS financial report for the year ending 31 July was accepted at the AGM. This along with the other reports is shown in this issue.

At the NZAS awards ceremony held on Thursday 12 November in Wellington, the Hon. Wayne Mapp, Minister of Research, Science and Technology, presented the Marsden Medal to Dr Fred Davey FRSNZ, Researcher Emeritus, Geological and Nuclear Sciences, the Shorland Medal to Prof. Alan Kaiser FRSNZ, MacDiarmid Institute for Advanced Materials and Nanotechnology, School of Chemical and Physical Sciences, Victoria University of Wellington, and the Research Medal to Dr Thomas Buckley, Landcare Research. The Science Communicator Award was made to Professor Ian Shaw, University of Canterbury.

A podcast of the Minister's opening address at the Awards, Professor Shaw's presentation, and closing comments to the ceremony by Professor Sir Peter Gluckman may be heard at <http://www.sciencemediacentre.co.nz/2009/11/13/podcast-ian-shaw-peter-gluckman-at-the-nzas-science-awards/>

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