

August 2023



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## Australasian Neuroscience Society Newsletter



*Conference venue for the 41st Annual Scientific ANS Meeting in Brisbane, Queensland in December this year.*

## Notifications

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### Become an ANS member or student member!

Please join us by becoming a Member of ANS.

You can join online at any time!

<https://tas.currinda.com/register/organisation/172>

Check out our website and follow updates on the ANS Twitter account or via our Facebook page.

 <https://www.ans.org.au>

 <https://twitter.com/AusNeuroSoc>

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# Acknowledgements

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## Sponsors *(We thank our Society partners)*

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- Neurological Foundation of New Zealand
- Otago Division of Sciences, University of Otago
- University of Tasmania
- The Florey institute of Neuroscience and Mental Health
- The Eccles Institute of Neuroscience, The John Curtin School of Medical Research, Australian National University
- Centre for Neuroscience, Flinders University
- Centre of Excellence for Integrative Brain Function, ARC Centre of Excellence
- South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute
- Hopwood Centre for Neurobiology, South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute
- Queensland Brain Institute, The University of Queensland

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# Message from the President

I would first like to thank the Queensland LOC for their efforts in building an exciting and creative scientific and social program for the 2023 ANS Annual Scientific Meeting to be held in Brisbane (4-7 Dec). Thanks also to the WA LOC who have started planning for the 2024 conference to be held in Perth. There is a lot to look forward to!

And now an update on the **Australasian Brain Bee Challenge**, a wonderful neuroscience education and outreach initiative that ANS has been proud to be involved with over many years. I would first like to acknowledge the superb leadership of Professor Ramesh Rajan (Monash University) who has led this activity across Australia and New Zealand since 2017, supported by dedicated state and regional convenors of the annual Brain Bee competition. Thank you, Ramesh, for all the energy and careful thought you have put into this role over many years. I am delighted to announce the appointment of a new ABBC Leadership Group, comprising Jennifer Rodger (WA convenor), Bruno van Swinderin (Qld/NT convenor) and Matt Kirkcaldie (Tasmania, past convenor). Congratulations and thank you to the new team who, with transitional input from Ramesh, have continued progressing the 2023 competition and beginning the 2024 round. I am looking forward to attending the annual national Brain Bee finals, to be held during the ANS Annual Scientific Meeting in December.

Continuing the neuroscience educational theme, the 2023 **Australian Course in Advanced Neuroscience** (ACAN) has just completed another highly successful year, as detailed elsewhere in this newsletter. Thanks especially to the Course Director, Chris Reid, and

co-directors Lucy Palmer, Karl Iremonger and Jay Bertran-Gonzalez, for designing and leading this fantastic research training experience. ANS is also grateful to the academic and industry supporters of ACAN and the oversight of the ACAN Management Committee, led by Greg Stuart.

I would like to congratulate Professor Pankaj Sah from The University of Queensland on his appointment as a Fellow to the Australian Academy of Science (item in this newsletter). And I would like to extend my congratulations to the ANS members recently awarded **King's Birthday Honours**. Professor Glenda Halliday AC FAA FAHMS has been appointed as a Companion of the Order of Australia (AC) for "eminent service to medical research in the field of neurodegenerative disorders, including the development of revised diagnostic criteria for Parkinson's disease, and as a mentor". Glenda was President of ANS from 2006-7 and was awarded the Nina Kondelos Prize in 2011. Her strength in bridging discovery research and clinical translation has led to major advances in the understanding of several major neurodegenerative conditions and has fundamentally changed international diagnostic criteria and clinical tools for staging these conditions. Emeritus Professor Phil Waite has been appointed as a Member of the Order of Australia, for "significant

service to science and to tertiary education". Phil was an ANS member from 1987-2017 and a member of ANS Council as NSW State Representative (1993-1996). Her research focused on neurotrauma, especially spinal cord injury, significantly advancing the field. Phil was also closely engaged with the spinal cord injury community and was a strong advocate for increasing research support in this area.



*Professor  
Glenda Halliday AC,  
ANS President 2006-7*

As an ANS Member, you will soon be receiving a request to participate in an online survey, the responses to which will be de-identified before being forwarded to the ANS Executive and Council. The outcomes are important to ensure we understand the perspectives of the neuroscience community and work towards goals that represent your priorities. The timing of this survey is also critical as we embark on developing a new ANS Strategic Plan. If you would like to start thinking about this, the current Strategic Plan (2018-2023) is available in the ANS Archive section of the Members Area at the ANS Web site. Thank you in advance for completing the survey and sharing your thoughts and ideas.



**Professor  
Janet Keast**

*President, ANS  
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# ANS 2023 Conference



**ANS 2023** AUSTRALASIAN NEUROSCIENCE SOCIETY  
41<sup>ST</sup> ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC MEETING  
4-7 December 2023 | W, Brisbane, Queensland

**EXCITING THE NETWORK**



Australasian  
Neuroscience  
Society



Marcello  
Rosa



George  
Paxinos



Michael  
Breakspear



Lizzie  
Coulson



Saul  
Villeda

We are excited to be welcoming our members and guests to the luxurious W Brisbane, a premier hotel with stunning views over the Brisbane River.



**The conference will kick off with casual welcome drinks on the Monday evening, followed by a retro beach themed Welcome Party on the beautiful rooftops of W Brisbane, with canapés, live cooking stations and band entertainment, on the Wednesday evening.**

A stimulating 3-day scientific program is in the works, with internationally acclaimed A/Prof Saul Villeda from the University of California, San Francisco confirmed as our international plenary speaker, as well as renowned national speakers, including Prof Elizabeth Coulson (University of Queensland), Prof Marcello Rosa (Monash University), Prof Michael Breakspear (University of Newcastle), and Prof George Paxinos AO (NeuRA). Read more on our plenary speakers here. The symposia for the ASM were recently announced – you can read the full profiles of symposium speakers and chairs, including symposium presentations, on the ANS website.

**Register for the biggest event in the Australasian neuroscience community – Early Bird is available only until 19 September!**

## Satellite Meetings

We are delighted to confirm three Satellite Meetings which will be held in partnership with the ANS 2023 Conference:

- CAMAND Conference
- RNA In Brain Function and Disease
- Australasian Society for Autonomic Neuroscience.

For more information on these satellite meetings, including how to register, please visit our website. If you are interested in running a satellite meeting, please complete the EOI form and return it to [secretariat@ans.org.au](mailto:secretariat@ans.org.au) to be considered.

Satellite Meeting organisers are entitled to claim \$20 per meeting registrant in subsidy, up to a maximum of \$1,000 for the purpose of reducing the meeting registration fees. The ANS ASM Satellite Meeting Policy is available [here](#).

## ANS Indigenous Travel Award EOI

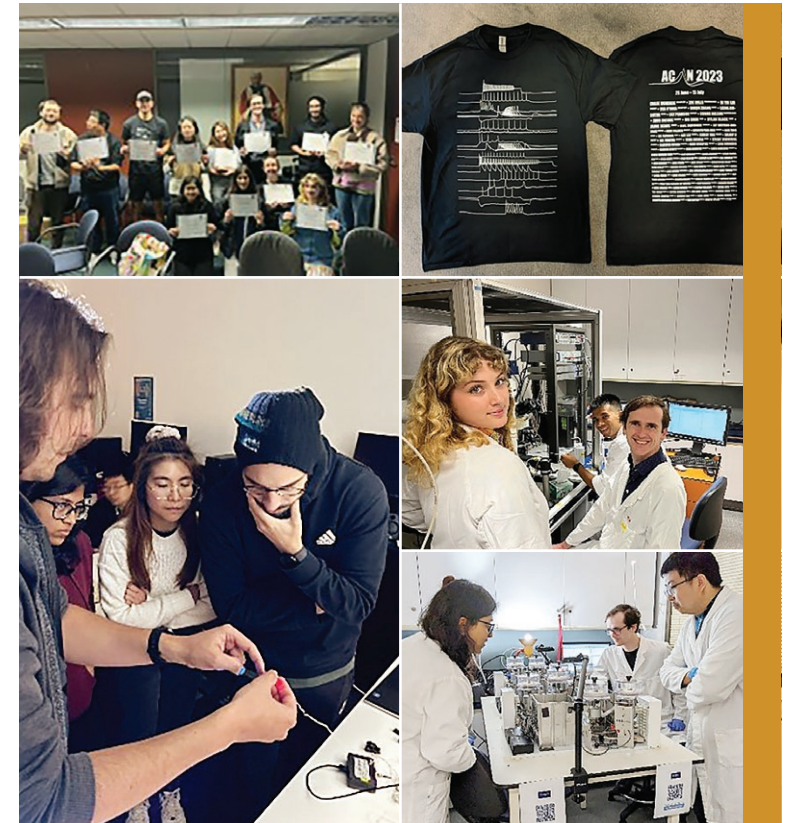
ANS is proud to offer travel awards for Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Māori students and researchers to attend the 2023 annual meeting in Brisbane. Click [here](#) for more information and a link to the online EOI form.

## ACAN Update

The Australasian Course in Advanced Neuroscience 2023 (ACAN) was held in sunny Melbourne in July. Twelve students immersed themselves in neuroscience for 3 weeks that covered the fundamentals of electrophysiology and neuronal network function to systems and behavior.

Christopher  
Reid, Lucy  
Palmer, Jay  
Bertran-  
Gonzalez and  
Karl Iremonger

The students were from around Australia and New Zealand, and stayed at University College, just a short stone's throw from the laboratory. Over 50 faculty contributed to the course making it a real team effort, including Daniel Aharoni who travelled from the USA to deliver a fantastic day on 'miniscope' imaging. All the lectures and practicals were delivered with enthusiasm and much appreciated by the students. Nothing builds camaraderie like working through into the early morning hours teaching students cutting edge science! A big thank you to our sponsors and support from diverse academic institutions across Australia and New Zealand that gave generously. Finally, we would like to acknowledge the support of the Florey Neuroscience and Mental Health Institute and the University of Melbourne for also providing space and infrastructure to hold the course. This will be the last ACAN course held in Melbourne and plans on what happens next are close, so keep an eye out! ACAN is unique with no other comparable neuroscience course available within the Asia Pacific region. It has been a pleasure to run it over the last 3 years and we look forward to seeing it continue to grow into the future.



Top left: ACAN 2023 cohort, Bottom left: Daniel Aharoni (UCLA) demonstrating the newest miniscope technology, Top right: Student-designed ACAN T-shirt. Traces were recorded by each student at ACAN, Middle right: Whole-cell recordings late into the night, Bottom right: Real-time conditioning by students throughout the last week.

## ANS EMCR Webinar 21st September, 3pm AEST

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With the success of our last webinar, the ANS EMCR Committee is excited to announce their next webinar to be hosted by Haruna Suzuki-Kerr (University of Auckland). We have three amazing Australasian Neuroscientists presenting their work, with topics ranging from axonal transport to pre-term brain injury. Keep an eye out on our [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) pages for updated information and a registration link! Hope to see you all there!

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Dr Stewart  
Ramsay

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*ANS EMCR Chair*

## Neuroscience at the Beach

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The 2023 Kioloa Neuroscience Colloquium took place at ANU's picturesque Kioloa Coastal Campus on a chilly weekend in May. This meeting has run every year since 1996, apart from the past few years thanks to a certain virus. So it was an excited group of about fifty neuroscientists from Canberra, Sydney and Newcastle who came together on 19-21 May, eager to make up for lost time.

The colloquium began with a captivating plenary delivered by Ehsan Arabzadeh (ANU), who skilfully explained the intricacies of decoding the language of the brain. Following Ehsan's presentation, researchers from UNSW Sydney, the University of Newcastle, the Eccles Institute of Neuroscience (ANU), and Western Sydney University took turns giving talks to share their latest findings. Many of the speakers were PhD students for whom this was their first conference talk. This meeting has always provided a friendly and supportive environment in which young scientists can develop their presentation skills. The quality of the talks was outstanding.

Following the talks, the program continued with a dynamic poster session, allowing attendees to engage with each other's research on a more personal level. As evening set in, the colloquium took on a different hue. Following a delicious dinner, attendees gathered around a crackling bonfire, singing songs and telling stories. Later, many of them wandered down to the nearby beach to watch the phosphorescence in the ocean and be awed by the amazing display of stars overhead.

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*(Neuroscience on the beach ... continued)*

On Sunday morning the second plenary speaker, Gila Moalem-Taylor (UNSW), inspired the audience with her talk on neuroimmune mechanisms underlying neuropathic pain. After Gila's plenary, the morning unfolded with early-career researchers taking the stage once more, sharing their latest discoveries. The program ended at noon with the award of the prize for best student talk – a tight competition, given the quality of the presentations. Attendees bid farewell to Kioloa, carrying with them the spirit of collaboration, discovery, and the beauty of the coastal campus.

The organisers thank ANS for providing the State funding that helped to make Kioloa 2023 such an outstanding success, and look forward to an even bigger and better Kioloa 2024.

**Muqin Zhang**

*PhD student, Eccles Institute  
of Neuroscience*



*Participants in the Kioloa Neuroscience Colloquium, May 2023*

# International Brain Research Organization

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IBRO would like to help our members, including the Australasian Neuroscience Society (ANS), spread the word about its news and events that are of interest to the broader neuroscience community. To do that, in January 2023, we launched a dedicated page on our website, as well as a section in our monthly newsletter, the IBRO Highlights, to include news and events from our member societies.

## Australian Academy of Science

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Pankaj Sah elected as a Fellow of The Australian Academy of Science in recognition of his contribution to neuroscience over more than 25 years.

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The University of Queensland's Professor Pankaj Sah has been elected as a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science in recognition of his contribution to neuroscience over more than 25 years. The Queensland Brain Institute (QBI) director joins the nation's eminent scientists, elected by his peers for the impact of his research and leadership.

Professor Sah is a global expert in the amygdala and its vital role in how the brain regulates emotion, encodes memories and produces behavioural outcomes. His lab was the first to define the types of neurons within the amygdala, their locations and intrinsic circuits, mapping the neural connections that underpin learning and memory.

**Professor Sah is one of 20 new Fellows announced to join the Australian Academy of Science.**

<https://www.uq.edu.au/news/article/2023/05/uq-neuroscientist-honoured-australian-academy-of-science>



# Professor Pankaj Sah, Honoured by the Australian Academy of Science

August 2023

Professor Pankaj Sah from The University of Queensland has been elected as a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science in recognition of his contribution to neuroscience over more than 25 years.



Professor Sah is a global expert in the amygdala and its vital role in how the brain regulates emotion, encodes memories and produces behavioural outcomes. His lab was the first to define the types of neurons within the amygdala, their locations and intrinsic circuits, [mapping the neural connections](#) that underpin learning and memory.

Professor Sah graduated in Medicine from The University of New South Wales, during which he spent an honours year doing science. This used to be called a B.Sc (Med) which he really enjoyed.

Following his internship, he decided to return to science and undertook a PhD with Peter Gage at the Australian National University (ANU) studying sodium currents in central neurons using whole cell voltage clamp. During this time, they had an informal discussion group called the Biology Interest Group (BIG) where students would get together to eat, drink and discuss biology. Professor Sah mentions that *“these discussions led to changes in direction for many of us”*. Having done a PhD in ion channel biophysics he turned to synaptic transmission and plasticity in acute brain slices and did his first postdoctoral work with Roger Nicoll at The University of California in San Francisco. These were some of the first experiments using whole cell recordings in brain slices which have since become standard laboratory technique. Professor Sah comments that *“it was a fun time during the early days of the LTP wars”*. He left the USA, returning to Australia for his second postdoctoral position, with Elspeth McLachlan in the Department of Physiology at The University of Queensland (UQ), working on the autonomic nervous system.

Professor Sah started his own laboratory in the Department of Physiology at the University of Newcastle in 1994 before moving to the John Curtin School of Medical Research at ANU in 1997. During the move to Newcastle, and having some time setting up his lab, he learnt about the amygdala and changed direction again to work on the amygdala and its circuits which he has continued to pursue to this day. In 2003 he was recruited to The University of Queensland (UQ) as a founding member of the Queensland Brain Institute and was appointed Deputy Director (Research) before becoming Director

in 2015. His laboratory concentrates on the neural mechanisms that mediate learning and memory formation in the mammalian brain.

In addition to his scientific discoveries, Professor Sah is widely respected for his contribution to research underpinning the science of learning, with the overarching goal of improving educational outcomes. He is passionate about education, particularly the education of young people. He was involved in the establishment of the Science of Learning Centre at QBI in 2009, a collaboration between neuroscientists, cognitive scientists and education researchers across UQ. In 2013 the Science of Learning Research Centre was funded as a special research initiative of the Australian Research Council and had nodes in all states except Tasmania. Professor Sah is also the inaugural Editor-in-Chief of the nature partner journal Science of Learning.

Professor Sah comments that...

*“A career in (Neuro)Science is challenging but rewarding. I encourage students and postdoctoral fellows to follow their passion. Don't be demoralized by failures along the way. Take chances and seize opportunities as they arise.”*

## Eureka Finalist, Dr Lila Landowski

The Australian Museum Eureka Prizes are the country's most comprehensive national science awards, honouring excellence across the areas of research & innovation, leadership, science engagement, and school science.

*"These extraordinary minds are not just advancing our collective knowledge, but they are also deeply committed to creating a better future for us all."* Australian Museum director Kim McKay AO said at the shortlist announcement.

This year, ANS member (and our ANS twitter coordinator) Dr Lila Landowski is a finalist for the Celestino Eureka Prize for Promoting Understanding of Science.

As a regular guest expert on the ABC, to viral videos and record-breaking Zoom lectures, Lila reaches the public across mediums and platforms to deliver her message of scientific progress for a brighter world. Her relatable style draws on the inspiring story of her own journey into STEM, engaging an audience of millions globally.

*"Neuroscience research can teach us so much about ourselves and those around us, but it is often pretty complicated. I love breaking down that complexity so everyone can learn and benefit. It helps us understand why we are the way we are, and it can help us learn how to be the best version of ourselves"* says Lila.

There are 55 finalists across 18 categories nationally. A full list of nominees for the 2023 Eureka Prize is available here: <https://australian.museum/get-involved/eureka-prizes/2023-eureka-prizes-finalists/>



Top: Dr Lila Landowski on ABC - The Drum.



Bottom: Eureka Finalist Dr Lila Landowski BMedRes (Hons.) PhD

# Senior Researcher: Professor Mark Hutchinson

August 2023

## My Journey Through the Intersection of Disciplines: A Story of Discovery and Innovation



*Professor Mark Hutchinson, Director of the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Nanoscale BioPhotonics*

In the world of medical science, I've always believed that the most exciting discoveries lie at the intersection of different disciplines. My journey, which has taken me through the fields of neuroscience, immunology, and pharmacology, has been driven by this belief.

My fascination with the complex interplay between these fields led me to the pioneering field of psychoneuroimmunology. Here, I've been fortunate to work with amazing complex teams of specialists around the world to explore and understand the intricate mechanisms of chronic pain and addiction. The work I've done on the role of immune signalling in the spinal cord and the effects of opioids on the central nervous system has been both challenging and rewarding. It's been an honour to see this research recognised and cited by my peers. But the most meaning out of all of this has come from my interactions with patients whose treatment has benefited from the new knowledge my work has created.

This impact and one of the most fulfilling aspects of my career has been the opportunity to contribute to the development of novel therapeutic strategies that span addiction, to pain to depression and anxiety. The collaborative efforts of the wide team I enjoy working with has the potential to make a significant impact on patients' lives through our treatments that are available today.

Throughout my career, I've been fortunate to have my research funded by a diverse array of sources including competitive grant funding, philanthropy, industry and private investors. For every successful funding outcome there are 20 attempts that never saw the light of day. And I am ok with that. My 'failures' have allowed me to learn more, hone my grants craft and further developed the key hypotheses to make a stronger and better pitch the next time. If I was working in sales, 1 sale out of 20 attempts is a pretty good day. Importantly, that is not 20 attempts at the same door. That is 20 different doors with a tailored pitch in each case.

In addition to my research, I've had the privilege of serving in leadership roles within the scientific community. As the President of Science and Technology Australia, I've been able to advocate for the importance of research and innovation in shaping Australia's future. I have been able to articulate that investing in fundamental science is a wise investment for the future. I have been able to tell the stories of how we have taken concepts and made capabilities, how we have gone from the bench to the boardroom, rather than gathering dust on a bookshelf. These targeted stories of the scientific journey need to be heard far and wide to help everyone appreciate what it takes to test hypotheses and create new knowledge.

One of the projects that I'm particularly proud of is the work I am now doing with the Australian Defence Force in creating the Human Integrated Sensor System. By applying an integrated capability of the psychoneuroimmunology and technology we have within the Australian Research Council Centre

of Excellence for Nanoscale BioPhotonics, we are pushing the boundaries of what's possible in our field to detect threat exposure earlier than ever before possible. Through this convergent science program and engagement with the Safeguarding Australia through Biotechnology Response and Engagement (SABRE) Alliance we are discovering dual uses for our technology and new funding for our research endeavours.

My journey in science has taught me the importance of curiosity, perseverance, and a willingness to venture into uncharted territories. I hope that my story can serve as an inspiration and a roadmap for Early and Mid-Career Researchers in the ANS. I believe the future of scientific discovery lies in our ability to cross the boundaries of traditional disciplines and explore the exciting intersections that lie in between.

# Senior Researcher: Professor Hannah Keage

August 2023

Always fascinated by relationships between the brain and behaviour.



Hannah Keage, Professor of Psychology at the University of South Australia

Hannah has always been fascinated by relationships between the brain and behaviour. While shopping as a teenager, she purchased a book called Physiological Psychology, and she has never looked back. Hannah completed a Bachelor of Behavioural Neuroscience at Monash University (2002) and a PhD assessing cognition and brain activity in children diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder at Flinders University (submitted in 2007). It was interesting, but she knew that the area wasn't quite what she was after. Hannah applied for post-docs and managed to secure an 18-month position with Professor Carol Brayne at the University of Cambridge UK, looking at relationships between clinical symptoms (including dementia) and neuropathologies in large population-based longitudinal cohort studies. It was a much better fit interest-wise and Carol and her team were supportive and driven. Hannah secured this job and managed to stay on with an EU Marie Curie Fellowship. After a few years, the Australian way of life was calling, and she moved to the University of South Australia in 2011. Somehow, that was 12 years ago, moving from Lecturer to Professor along the way.

Hannah comments: *"The thing is, there are so many paths to success (whatever that is!). So instead, here are three reflections based on topics ECRs often ask me"*:

1. **Dealing with rejection.** This is the air we breathe as scientists. Statistically, we will fail more than we will succeed. We must expect rejection. Some things do really hurt. My first externally funded post-doc application was through Alzheimer's UK; I made it to the interview stage, where there were five candidates for four Fellowships. After a trip to London, I received an email that I was not one of those four. We must move on, even if it's after 24 hours of permitted disappointment.
2. **Managing a family.** This is so personal, sometimes it's a choice, sometimes it's not. Having children was always important to me and I have been fortunate enough to have two with a fantastic partner. We had our first child 1 year out of my PhD confirmation (in the UK) and the second child 4 years out (back in Australia). There's no ideal time to have children. Whether you're a post-doc or a Professor, caring for small children is hugely draining. I remember unnecessarily running code in my post-doc just so I could close my eyes for 5 minutes (computers were slower back then). It gets easier; the days are long, but the years really are short.

3. **Benchmarking and academic cohort effects.** Times change. Grant success rates have declined, research opportunities outside of academia have increased, academic administrative load has increased. Take advice from those who have gone before you, including me, with a grain of salt. The academic landscape will look very different in 20-30 years.

And while I have you, please check out our lab's most recent publication, led by PhD student Daria Gutteridge in collaboration with A/Prof Sharna Jamadar and the ASPREE Neuro Team - The Relationship between Long-Term Blood Pressure Variability and Cortical Thickness in Older Adults <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neurobiolaging.2023.05.011>

Hannah Keage is currently a Professor of Psychology at the University of South Australia. She co-leads the Cognitive Ageing and Impairment Neuroscience Lab (@CAIN\_Lab). Her research focuses on cognitive ageing and the neurobiological processes that drive these changes, including those causing age-related cognitive impairments such as delirium and dementia.

August 2023

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## Communications

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**Is there information you would like included in our ANS Newsletter, published in our monthly online Bulletin, posted on our website, or Facebook page, or tweeted?**

ANS has a Communications Committee to help members disseminate information and assist the Society in publicising its activities to Members and the public. This committee is co-chaired by Dr Nathalie Dehorter (Australian National University) and A/Prof Marco Morsch (Macquarie University). It oversees the production of the newsletter and ensures that current content is posted on the ANS website, published in our monthly online Bulletin prepared by the ANS Secretariat, posted on the ANS Facebook page (curated by Dr Nathalie Dehorter) and disseminated through postings on the ANS Twitter account (by Dr Lila Landowski, University of Tasmania) and LinkedIn (curated by Prof Thomas Fath, Macquarie University).

-  <http://www.ans.org.au>
-  <https://twitter.com/AusNeuroSoc>
-  <https://www.facebook.com/AusNeuroSoc>
-  <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8362021/>

If you have content for us, please email Marco Morsch ([marco.morsch@mq.edu.au](mailto:marco.morsch@mq.edu.au)).

### **Become an ANS member or student member!**

Please join with your colleagues in Australia and New Zealand by becoming a Member of ANS. You can join online at any time!  
<https://tas.currinda.com/register/organisation/172>

[www.ans.org.au](http://www.ans.org.au)

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## Policy

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### **ANS Policy on Requests for Publicity via Email Circulation:**

The policy of ANS is to minimise email traffic to members. Advertisements for meetings and other significant announcements such as job vacancies can be added to the website and included in the newsletter and monthly bulletin if appropriate. Such requests should be directed to the ANS Secretary.

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