



# Society for Reproductive Biology

Newsletter No 50 February 2003

Australian Convention and Travel Services  
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## Chairman's Report 2002-2003

*John Hearn*

At our AGM last year the Society endorsed my statement on issues and directions 2001-2003. This resulted from a survey of the membership and substantial input from your committee. Here I report progress against that plan. The committee has met seven times (5 teleconference) during the past year.

- 1. SRB Core Objectives** To lead, support and promote research and research training in reproduction, fertility and development underpinning agriculture and food, biomedicine and health, environment and conservation.
- 2. Scientific Meetings** We have confirmed our major partnership with ESA and are achieving increased stability through joint meetings 2000-2004. The quality of meetings is excellent, thanks to broad participation of the membership, the work of Kate Loveland and the POC; and the work of John Curlewis, Ray Rodgers and the LOCs. Thanks also to our conference organiser, Mike Pickford, and to our session sponsors this year the Dairy CRC and the Pest Animal Control CRC. I encourage all members to attend our conference in Melbourne in 2003.
- 3. Membership** We must redouble our efforts to recruit in the coming year, especially among research students and scientists in our own and allied fields. A committee member is being designated as Membership Secretary.
- 4. Early Career Scientists** Our graduate student network is developing. The Society will focus also in 2003 on opportunities and information for postdoctoral researchers. We seek further sponsorship for these activities. We are grateful for current sponsorship from Serono for our junior scientists award.
- 5. Scientific Alliances** We continue to explore closer working relationships with the Society for Reproduction and Fertility (Contact Member: Camilla Myers) and the Society for the Study of Reproduction (contact member: Kate Loveland). A proposal for affiliate memberships is being developed. SRB hosted a joint symposium with FSA in Melbourne in October 2002 and is open to further joint symposia in areas of mutual interest. We are also exploring a joint symposium with COMBIO.
- 6. Communication** We thank Jim Cummins for his long and dedicated service. A plan for 2003 will be implemented to enhance the SRB's communication, information and marketing services to members. We welcome Melinda Jasper who is taking on this vital role for the Society.
- 7. Publication** The Society's partnership with Reproduction, Fertility and development is helping to improve the journals international standing and impact. Please submit your excellent papers to build success for our Australia-based journal. Editor Camilla Myers is doing a great job. An issue of the Journal (13,2001) published the SRB sponsored conference "From Elephants to Aids" to honour Roger Short. Members may wish to suggest other symposia to Camilla and her committee.
- 8. Winning Team(s)** Many members of the Society are engaged in the Centre of Excellence in Stem Cell Biology (CEO Alan Trounson) and the ARC Centre of Excellence in Biotechnology and Development (CEO John Aitken). This year, two major NHMRC Program Grants were awarded – to Jock Findlay and the team at Prince Henry's; and to Rob Norman and Ray Rodgers with the team at the Reproductive Medicine Unit in Adelaide. Congratulations and good luck to all.
- 9. Policy** Members of the Society played prominent roles in advice and submissions to Backing Australia's Ability, the Higher Education Review launched by Minister Brendan Nelson; Research Priorities, coordinated by Minister Peter McGauran and the Chief Scientist, Robin Batterham; and the Australian Biotechnology Advisory Council which advises Ministers and Biotechnology Australia on research development in the biosciences and biotechnology. Alan Trounson and John Hearn advised many parliamentarians and the Prime Minister concerning stem cell biology. We will be developing further policy options for the Society, some of these jointly with the ESA.

- 10. Organisation** We welcome Lois Salamonsen, Sarah Robertson and Dominique Blache to the Committee. We are also engaged in succession planning for next year when several officers and committee members complete their terms. On behalf of all of you, thanks to the Committee for its hard and sustained work. We look forward to an active and productive 2003.
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## **Secretary's Report**

*Robert Gilchrist*

**2002 SRB Committee Elections** Elections for the SRB Committee were held late in 2002 and I was re-elected as Honorary Secretary, and Sarah Robertson was elected as Ordinary Committee member. We were both elected unopposed. In addition, the committee has co-opted Lois Salamonsen and Dominique Blanche as Ordinary Committee Members - congratulations to all. Anne Turner and Graham Jenkin have retired from the committee and we thank them both for their contribution to the committee and to the society in general over the last 3 years.

**New Office Bearers** Lois Salamonsen has been elected the new SRB Deputy Chairperson and is taking an active role in the portfolio of SRB Policy. Melinda Jasper is the new SRB Communications Officer, and has vowed to take on the task of updating and revamping the society's web-site. The committee also recently elected Sarah Robertson to Chair the next Program Organising Committee. Sarah will take over from Kate Loveland after this year's Annual Scientific Meeting.

## **Treasurer's Report**

*Chris O'Neill*

The Society concluded the 2001-2 financial year in a good state with a trading surplus of \$8,500. This leaves the Society with net assets in excess of \$94,000 (of which \$20,000 is set aside as corpus funds in support of the T.J. Robinson Travelling fellowship). The Society's activities were supported by generous sponsorship by the CRC for the Biological Control of Pest Animals and Sero Australia P/L. The sound state of the balance sheet allowed the Society to invest in: significant support for student travel (~\$5,500 p.a.); a greater number of symposia and guest speakers at the annual meeting; and sponsorship of some other conferences of interest to members. While the recent pressure on membership numbers seems to have eased, greater efforts in building the membership base is required to secure future operating surpluses.

## **Postgraduate Student Representative's Report**

*Christine White*

Postgraduate students represent the future of the SRB, and the Annual Scientific Meeting in Adelaide this year was a great opportunity for students to

present their work to the Society and participate in the sharing of ideas in reproductive biology. To highlight student events at the conference, this year's Program had a dedicated Student Members page, with information about the Student Lunch Lecture, Students Annual Meeting and the SRB/ESA Student BBQ, and also contained information about the benefits of student membership and how to apply, and an advertisement for the Reproduction, Fertility and Development Travel Award. To further raise the profile of the award among SRB students, Camilla Myers, Managing Editor of RFD, spoke about the award at the Students Annual Meeting.

**Student Lunch Lecture** This year's Founders Lecturer, Professor Alan Trounson, spoke with students in a roundtable discussion at the Student Lunch Lecture session on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> September. This was a great success, and was enjoyed by all those attending. Professor Trounson spoke about how he started in research and why he has continued, the passion he has for science and the amazing potential it has to impact positively on people's lives. We discussed the current ethical debates surrounding stem cell research, and the difficulties involved in communicating science to the non-scientific public and government, but also how vital it is that all of us do so in a transparent and responsible way.

**Students Annual Meeting** A small but enthusiastic group of SRB students had an informal meeting at the beginning of the Student BBQ, and discussed a number of current issues. Thanks to all those who came along and contributed! Suggestions were:

- Website update
- A jobs noticeboard in the trade display area
- Formal and informal networking
- Student rates for the Conference Dinner
- Applying for membership and the requirement for nominated by a current SRB member
- A New Zealand SRB Student Representative, to act as a local point of contact for students

Any students wanting to make a comment or raise any other issues should contact me.

## **Junior Scientist Award-Adelaide 2002**

*Alan Tilbrook*

There were 23 applications for the JSA this year. The quality of the abstracts was impressive and the judges had a difficult task to reduce the strong field to six for the oral session. In the assessment of the abstracts, the judges considered development of hypothesis and experimental design, adequacy of

methods and statistical analyses, technical expertise of the applicant, validity of conclusions, originality and innovation and general presentation. The six presenters in the JSA oral session were John Bromfield, Aiqing Li, David Sharkey, Jeremy Smith, Rebecca Thomas and Christine White. The quality of presentations was outstanding and the JSA Committee had a difficult task separating the finalists. The criteria used to judge the presentations included general presentation, hypothesis development and experimental design, adequacy of methods and statistical analysis, validity of conclusion and discussion in question time. Congratulations to Jeremy Smith of the University of Western Australia on winning the 2002 SRB JSA Award. The title of Jeremy's paper was "Leptin dynamics in the pregnant rat: changes in the clearance rate and transplacental passage late in gestation".

## Program Organising Committee Chair's Report

*Kate Loveland*

The Annual Scientific Meeting will be held in conjunction with the Endocrine Society of Australia (ESA) on September 14- 17th 2003 at the Melbourne Convention Centre. We are very pleased to announce that the Society's major plenary speaker, the Founders' Lecturer, will be Tom Fleming from the University of Southampton. His work in the areas of tight junction formation and pre-implantation embryo development has delivered key insights into the mechanisms that underpin embryo health and function. The Junior Scientist Award finalist session will again feature prominently in the 2003 conference. The joint oral sessions with ESA on Male and Female Reproduction were deemed highly successful, and these will be scheduled again for 2003, along with the Late-Breaking Science session at the end of the conference. These oral presentations will be selected by representatives of both POCs. Details of the symposia will be available early in 2003. Submission will be by abstract, and once again, there will be NO hardcopy submissions. Abstracts can be submitted by email only, and instructions will be placed on the meeting homepage when the call for abstracts is placed. Applications for grants to assist students to travel and present at the Annual Scientific Meeting 2003 will be requested at the time of the call for registration, which is generally in early - mid May.

## Future SRB Scientific Meetings

2003 Melbourne, 14-17<sup>th</sup> September jointly with ESA  
2004 Sydney, 23-28<sup>th</sup> August jointly with ESA  
2005 possibly in Perth with ESA

### **2003 SRB Annual Scientific Meeting**

The website this year is at: <http://www.esa-srb.org.au/>

Final Abstract Submission Date: noon 12 May 2003

Acceptance Notification: 23 June 2003

Registration Deadline for abstract publication: 30 June 2003

## SRB Travel Awards for Students

Travels awards are available for students to attend the SRB Annual Scientific Meeting.

Application forms are available from:

Dr Chris O'Neill

The University of Sydney

Department of Physiology

Human Reproduction Unit

Unit E25 - Royal North Shore Hospital

NSW 2006

(02) 9926 7148 Fax (02) 9926 6343

email [chriso@med.usyd.edu.au](mailto:chriso@med.usyd.edu.au)

In addition, Reproduction, Fertility and Development annually offer a travel award to a PhD or postdoctoral researcher to attend a nominated meeting.

For further information and an application form:

<http://www.publish.csiro.au/journals/rfd/travel.cfm>

## Society Membership

For an application form, contact:

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## Communications Officer

*Melinda Jasper*

**Website** SRB is in the process of purchasing a domain name for its website. Once this is complete, the website will undergo a substantial upgrade over the course of the next few months. SRB mail will announce the launch of the new site in the near future, so if you haven't subscribed to asrbmail, now would be a good time.

Please note the current website will remain active until the new site is launched. Current address:

<http://numbat.murdoch.edu.au/spermatology/index.htm>

**Newsletter** This newsletter will also be available as a pdf file on the new website.

**SRB Mail** To subscribe to the asrblist mailing list, register your details at:

<http://mailman.med.usyd.edu.au/mailman/listinfo.cgi/asrblist>

To post a message to all the list members, simply send your message to:

[asrblist@mailman.med.usyd.edu.au](mailto:asrblist@mailman.med.usyd.edu.au)

Please contact me if you have any queries in regards to the newsletter or website.

## Contact Details for 2003 SRB Committee Members

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### Program Organising Committee 2001-3

Chair: Dr Kate Loveland  
Members: Arun M Dharmarajan, Ann Drummond,  
Sarah Meachem, Sarah Robertson,  
Andrew Sinclair, Anne Turner

### Chairperson

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### Local Organising Committee (SRB/ESA) 2003

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