

ASET NSW Inc 2016 Chairperson's Report

It only seems like a few days since my last report - how times flies (as we're getting older) I blame it on the silicon chips that we find in many of the devices we use every day.

Our 2 day conference at Sydney Grammar School was well supported and we thank the Catholic Education Office, Sydney Diocese for their support of lab technicians.

We have been kept busy with 5 PD days in 10 months. Orange (WHS/GHS and Chemwatch labelling), Booragul (Chemwatch Advanced), Lidcombe (Chemwatch Beginners and Advanced) and at Taronga Western Plains Zoo, Dubbo (Compliance in Science). Feedback has been most positive and indicates that this type of PD is in great demand as we approach 1st January when we are to be compliant with the GHS. My thanks must go to Chris Kelly, Karen Mellenbergh and Rita Steffe who have freely given their time to present on these days.

In my role as President of SETA (Science Education Technicians Australia) I attended the STEM X Academy dinner in Canberra in January. It was very pleasing to see how enthusiastic the Primary and Secondary teachers were about the 5 days of Science that they experienced including Real Science Connect workshops and presentations, visits to Australian Institute of Sport, Mt Stromlo Observatory, CSIRO Discovery Centre, Questacon and a Food and Wine excursion which was purely scientific of course! A lot of these teachers were from remote areas of Australia and didn't have the opportunity to take part in Professional Development closer to home. There were several scholarships were on offer to cover their costs. Having seen the program, I can only dream about having that PD on offer to enhance our daily science lives.

In February, the ASET 2014/15 committee (Julie Wells, Karen Mellenbergh, Bev Leszinsky, Wendy Cottee, Cathy Mullen and myself) received a State Parliamentary award for volunteering our service to science education. Linda Burney, then Shadow Minister for Education was on hand to present these awards and our patron Prof Mary O'Kane came along to show her support. A very proud achievement indeed!

We began negotiations with Steve Jones from Highland Creative about developing a new and brighter website as the old one wasn't as user friendly as we would have liked. We are very happy with the end product and hope that you will use it more often.

As well as our patron Prof Mary O'Kane, we have enlisted some ambassadors, Fred Watson, Prof Dr Mike Archer, Simon Crook and Ben Newsome, who are extremely honoured to have been asked to take on this role. They will be promoting ASET NSW in their everyday occupations.

Many of you would be aware of the School Science Laboratory Technicians' National Standards. Although still in draft form, I am happy to announce that this document will be owned jointly by ASTA and SETA as this partnership will have a stronger chance of getting it adopted at a Federal level then passed on through the education sectors. This will be a lengthy process but well worth it in the end to finally get the professional and financial recognition that we deserve.

In the July holidays I attended the national conference for Science teachers and Lab Technicians that was held at Somerville House in Brisbane from 3-6 July.

The theme of the conference was "Superheroes of Science - Unmask your Potential".

Keynote speakers included Prof Neal Menzies, Head of UQ's School of Agriculture and Food Sciences, Dean of Agriculture and Professor of Soil and Environmental Science, whose question to us "Is feeding the people costing us the Earth?" 3 cereals (wheat, rice, corn/maize) make up 50% of human energy.

Dr Alex Zelinsky, Australia's Chief Defence Scientist, a Computer Scientist, a Systems Engineer and a Roboticist, Dr Brad Tucker, Astrophysicist/Cosmologist, from the Research School of Astronomy and Astrophysics, Mount Stromlo Observatory at the Australian National University in Canberra Dr Stefan Hajkovicz, Senior Principal Scientist at CSIRO, and Professor Ian Godwin. They enlightened us with their passion for studying science at high school and where the different fields of science have led them to where they are today.

The Chief Scientist, Dr Alan Finkel was the speaker at the Stanhope Oration. He had 4 messages -

1. Aspire to great heights
2. Pursue something new
3. Lead from the top with conviction
4. Don't forget message #1

The conference workshops were interesting and gave me new ways to prepare pracs that can hopefully make Science subjects more interesting and inspire more students to follow Science through to university. Science displayers were very generous with their time and giving out resources. The theme followed through to the conference dinner where many superheroes were unveiled and unleashed their super powers. Special mention must go to our table's superhero Captain Chemical (that is another story for another time). Next year the conference will be in Hobart from 9-12 July 2017, and I can highly recommend combining this conference with a holiday in the Apple Isle.

As this will be my last Chairperson's report I thank you all for your support in my role over the last 5 years. Without you as members we wouldn't have an association.

As per our constitution 3 of us must stand down at the AGM so please give serious consideration to stand for election. It's not a hard role and you will be working with a good team.

Special thanks to our suppliers who have given freely of their time to support us at our conference, PD days and for their generosity in giving us their products as lucky door prizes. Please continue to support them.

We have come a long way in the 5 short years since our inception and look forward to the next 5 years of growth.

Thank you to the current committee, Julie Wells, Wendy Cottee, Cathy Mullen, Tracey King and Cathy Brown. You all have amazing talents and it has been a pleasure to work alongside you.

Margaret Croucher

Chairperson 2011-2016