



MEDIA STATEMENT

Verity Firth MP

**Minister for Women
Minister for Science and Medical Research
Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Cancer)
Minister Assisting the Minister for Climate Change, Environment and Water**

Thursday, 18 October 2007

NSW YOUNG GUN SCIENTISTS RECOGNISED

NSW's best young scientists were honoured tonight in the annual NSW/ACT Young Tall Poppy Science Awards.

Minister for Science and Medical Research Verity Firth announced this year's awards recognised the achievements of 13 outstanding young scientists who are making world class progress in their chosen fields.

“‘Tall poppy’ is a metaphor for excellence and the Young Tall Poppy Science Awards are about celebrating our smarts rather than cutting them down,” said Ms Firth.

“NSW is home to many of Australia’s leading research institutes, hospitals, and universities and the annual Young Tall Poppy Science Awards recognise the brilliant young scientists that are behind their success.

“The 2007 NSW/ACT Young Tall Poppy Science Award winners are the intellectual stars of our future and demonstrate the vital role scientific research plays in fostering a healthier community and environment as well as driving economic growth.”

“This year’s winners include Dr Carola Vinuesa who recently discovered a gene that appears to be a crucial link in the development of autoimmune diseases such as diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, and multiple sclerosis.

“Then there’s Dr Craig O’Neil who is helping us understand the differences between earth and non-inhabitable planets through sophisticated computer modelling, and Dr James Tickner whose scanning technology recently featured in an \$8.4 million trial at Brisbane Airport.”

Other 2007 winners include four scientists working at the cutting edge of cancer research; three working on marine research; one investigating a nerve disease in children; one investigating the relationship between diet and asthma; and another studying ways to improve agriculture and environmental management.

Ms Firth said the annual Young Tall Poppy Science Awards are an initiative of the Australian Institute of Policy and Science, and supported by the NSW Government.

“Our 2007 Tall Poppies range in age from 27 to 38 and have collectively won numerous awards, attracted millions of dollars in research grants and generated a range of patents,” said Ms Firth.

“The award winners demonstrate the breadth and diversity of the scientific research taking place in NSW and the ACT.”

Ms Firth said the awards not only acknowledge the winners' achievements but also give them a chance to demonstrate their value as role models by promoting and encouraging an interest in science across the wider community.

“These Awards not only encourage young people to study and pursue a career in the sciences but also aim to make our younger generation more science-literate so they can participate in future public debates on issues such as climate change, water conservation and genetically modified foods,” said Ms Firth.

Over the next four years, the NSW Government will be investing about \$160 million into science and medical research.

Media contact: Jeff Singleton 0410 476 890

2007 YOUNG TALL POPPY SCIENCE AWARD WINNERS

- Dr Joshua Burns, 31, Children's Hospital at Westmead, who is working on a world-first clinical trial to determine if vitamin C can help children with an inherited nerve disease that affects their feet and ankles.
Email joshuab2@chw.edu.au or 02 9845 1228
- Dr Vanessa Hayes, 37, Garvan Institute of Medical Research, whose research focuses on how genetic differences increase the risk of developing cancers.
Email v.hayes@garvan.org.au or 02 9295 8345
- Dr Emma Johnston, 34, University of New South Wales, who is investigating how contaminants and introduced marine species affect native marine life in locations including the Great Barrier Reef and Antarctica.
Email e.johnston@unsw.edu.au or 02 9385 1825
- Dr Kate Jolliffe, 37, University of Sydney, whose research work includes developing molecules to better help cancer drugs attack cancer cells.
Email jolliffe@chem.usyd.edu.au or 02 9351 2297
- Dr Nadine Kasparian, 29, University of New South Wales, who is studying how people with a strong family history of melanoma respond to genetic testing and is developing a web-based "Melanoma Risk Calculator".
Email n.kasparian@unsw.edu.au or 02 9382 0110
- Dr Brendan Kelaher, 36, University of Technology, Sydney, who is researching the impact of over fishing, coastal development, pollution, desalination, invasive species and climate change on marine ecosystems.
Email brendan.kelaher@uts.edu.au or 02 9514 4068
- Dr Craig O'Neill, 28, Macquarie University, who has pioneered sophisticated computer modelling to simulate planet formation and better understand the differences between earth and non-inhabitable planets.
Email coneill@els.mq.edu.au or 9850 9673
- Dr Matt Taylor, 27, University of New South Wales, who is researching fish stocking and release techniques to help develop better recreational and commercial fisheries.
Email mattytaylor@unsw.edu.au or 02 9385 2079
- Dr James Tickner, 33, CSIRO Minerals, whose scanning technology was used in a recently completed \$8.4 million trial at Brisbane Airport.
Email james.tickner@csiro.au or 02 9710 6732
- Dr Nicole Verrills, 31, University of Newcastle, who is using state-of-the-art molecular biology techniques to identify genes and proteins that contribute to cancer.
Email nikki.verrills@newcastle.edu.au or 02 4921 5619
- Dr Carola Vinuesa, 38, Australian National University, who recently discovered a gene that appears to be a crucial link in the development of autoimmune diseases such as diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, and multiple sclerosis.
Email carola.vinuesa@anu.edu.au or 02 6125 4500

- Dr Charles Warren, 32, University of Sydney, who is studying factors that limit plant growth to help improve agriculture and environmental management.
Email charles.warren@bio.usyd.edu.au or 02 9351 2678
- Dr Lisa Wood, 38, University of Newcastle, who is investigating the role of diet in the management of asthma and examining the link between asthma and obesity.
Email lisa.wood@newcastle.edu.au

Footer boilerplate text about the Young Tall Poppies Science Awards...

The Young Tall Poppy Science Awards recognise outstanding young researchers across all fields of science and engage them in the promotion of science and innovation in schools and the broader community. Young Tall Poppies are selected on the basis of high academic and research achievements at doctoral and post-doctoral level together with excellent communication skills and an involvement in promoting science in the community.

The Young Tall Poppy Science Awards are an initiative of the Australian Institute of Policy and Science (AIPS). The NSW Awards are supported by the NSW Office for Science and Medical Research (Department of State and Regional Development).

The Tall Poppy is a metaphor for excellence and endeavour and symbolises Australia's pride in outstanding achievers in all fields. For further information, please see www.aips.net.au/tallpoppies.