

Jodi McKay

Minister for Tourism
Minister for the Hunter
Minister for Science and Medical Research
Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Cancer)



Embargoed until Friday 11 September 2009

Leading biology researcher named 2009 NSW Scientist of the Year

Minister for Science and Medical Research Jodi McKay today congratulated Sydney-based researcher Professor Stephen Simpson who was named 2009 NSW Scientist of the Year last night.

Ms McKay said Professor Simpson, from the University of Sydney, was awarded the prestigious \$60,000 award for his leading work in biological studies.

“The NSW Scientist of the Year Award recognises and rewards our leading researchers for work that generates economic, health, environmental or technological benefits for our State,” Ms McKay said.

“Professor Simpson is internationally recognised for his cutting-edge research into nutrition and its implications for ecology, evolution, agriculture and human health.

“His unique study on locust swarming and human nutrition has advanced our understanding of ageing and human obesity, with flow-on benefits for disease prevention and health provision.

“The high quality of this year’s award nominees highlights New South Wales’ standing as Australia’s clever State.”

Ms McKay said the awards are part of the New South Wales Government’s commitment to supporting the State’s knowledge sector.

“Our scientists are world leaders in their fields and it is important we recognise them and continue to foster and build the sector,” she said.

“Through the work of scientists such as Professor Simpson, New South Wales research continues to deliver breakthroughs, creating jobs and attracting overseas investment.

“Earlier this year the New South Wales Government hosted a forum to foster stronger collaboration to tackle research priorities.

“We also recently launched a \$5 million NSW Energy Challenge Prize to encourage innovative solutions for a renewable energy supply for the State.”

NSW Chief Scientist and Scientific Engineer Professor Mary O’Kane said the awards were an important recognition of the contribution the New South Wales academic and research community has made to the State.

“These are prestigious awards for recipients,” Professor O’Kane said.

“Last year’s inaugural winner, Professor Martin Green, is a long term world leader in solar photovoltaic research. His work keeps NSW on the world map of energy research.

“Similarly, this year’s winner, Professor Stephen Simpson has an outstanding international reputation. In fact, winners in all categories of this year’s awards are great examples of why NSW is renowned as a clever State.

“The work of these researchers not only enhances the reputation of our State, it attracts national and international investment in our knowledge sector.”

**** See attached for a list of 2009 NSW Scientist of the Year Category Winners.**

NSW Scientist of the Year 2009 Category Winners:

Environment, Water and Climate Change Sciences - Professor Brett Neilan, University of New South Wales

Professor Neilan is considered to be a world leader in the genetics of toxic cyanobacteria (blue-green algae).

The results of his research on the cyanobacteria has helped revolutionise an entire field of environmental science by identifying and characterising the four biological pathways responsible for the algae, which chokes waterways and can produce toxins that are harmful to humans and animals through contact or ingestion.

Physics, Earth Sciences, Chemistry and Astronomy – Dr Linlin Ge, University of New South Wales

Dr Ge's research includes radar and optical remote sensing, building and bridge deformation monitoring and innovative applications of GPS.

In May 2008 his expertise enabled detailed, near real-time satellite assessment of a devastating earthquake measuring 8.0 on the Richter Scale that struck the Wenchuan region of Sichuan Province of China, impacting 250,000 square kilometres and claiming over 80,000 lives.

Biomedical Sciences - Professor Jürgen Götz, Brain and Mind Research Institute, University of Sydney

Professor Götz is the Chair of Molecular Biology and Director of the Alzheimer's and Parkinson's Laboratory at the Brain and Mind Research Institute of the University of Sydney and is a recognised international leader in the field of Alzheimer's disease Research.

His understanding of the toxicity of certain elements on the brain has been used in advancing therapeutic intervention and is contributing to the development of better treatments for the sufferers of Alzheimer's disease.

Plant and Animal Sciences - Professor Stephen Simpson, University of Sydney

Professor Simpson is a Federation Fellow in the School of Biological Sciences at the University of Sydney, whose body of work is impacting a variety of scientific fields – from locust swarms to obesity to more effective and environmentally sustainable dietary supplements for aquaculture.

More broadly, Professor Simpson's high impact work is helping to tackle challenges in a range of different areas:

- It has provided fundamental insights into the dietary causes of the human obesity epidemic and the aging process.
- It has linked individual physiology to mass migration in locusts, which has helped predict and manage locust outbreaks.
- It is driving new approaches to optimising animal feeds in the aquaculture industry, which is supporting efforts to minimise environmental impacts and maximise fish welfare.

- His work is also helping conserve endangered species such as kakapo parrots and wild primates.

Engineering, Mathematics and Computer Sciences - Professor Gernot Heiser, University of New South Wales, NICTA and Open Kernel Labs

Professor Heiser leads one of Australia's and the world's foremost computer operating systems research groups. His group has built a number of operating systems, including a mathematical proof that guarantees an operating system will never "crash".

His work has the potential to earn billions of dollars in royalties.

Leadership in Teaching Secondary Science and Mathematics – Mr William Adams, Orange High School

Mr Williams is Deputy Principal at Orange High School and the full-time coordinator of e2, an initiative that extends curriculum options to students by forming classes across five participating public schools.

Using videoconferencing, on-line technologies and face-to-face teaching, students in collaborating institutions are able to study a range of subjects that would be unavailable to them in their individual schools.