

# FNI News

Florey  
Neuroscience  
Institutes

Improving life through brain research

## Director's message



*Frederick Mendelsohn*

Professor Frederick Mendelsohn  
Director, Florey Neuroscience Institutes  
Director, Howard Florey Institute

**At our inaugural Annual General Meeting, we heard an outstanding presentation from one of Florey Neuroscience Institutes' scientific leaders.**

Prof Samuel Berkovic heads what is arguably the world's leading epilepsy research group. With his co-worker, Prof Ingrid Scheffer, their team has uncovered the first genetic causes of idiopathic epilepsy and they continue to make dramatic advances in this area.

It is fascinating that most of the genetic causes they have discovered code for ion channels – proteins involved in regulating the entry of charged ions into

nerve cells – thereby changing the excitability of the cell.

In what is a superb example of the FNI's overarching rationale, their clinical and family studies lead to genomic analysis to identify gene abnormalities, which then lead to basic studies by Dr Steven Petrou's group at the molecular, cellular and whole animal level to understand how these genetic abnormalities cause epilepsy. The loop is then closed by the search for new drugs to correct these disorders and finally their evaluation in clinical trials. The overall aim is to develop better treatments for epilepsy.

## Mission, vision and values

The FNI recently developed its mission, vision and values statements to define the organisation and guide strategic planning.

### Our Mission

Improve life through brain research.

### Our Vision

To be recognised as a leading international brain research institute.

### Our Values

Innovation and excellence  
Commitment and passion  
Integrity and rigour  
Collaboration and team work

## Work in progress

**The amalgamation of the Brain Research Institute, Howard Florey Institute and National Stroke Research Institute to form the Florey Neuroscience Institutes (FNI), and the FNI's co-location with the Mental Health Research Institute, continues to make progress. Following are some of the milestones achieved during the past three months.**

### Inaugural FNI Annual General Meeting

The FNI's first Annual General Meeting was held on 10 April 2008 at the Parkville campus. Attended by more than 130 people, the AGM included scientific and award presentations. During the AGM Prof John McKenzie, retiring as Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) from the University of Melbourne, formally resigned from the FNI Board and is to be replaced by the incoming Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), Prof Peter Rathjen.

All other members of the FNI Board were re-elected, with Mr Charles Allen continuing as Chairman.

### Creating an organisation

The FNI signed an agreement with the Mental Health Research Institute regarding the funding obligations each institute has for the Parkville and Austin buildings. The agreement also included management guidelines for funding and governance for fundraising conducted through the Brain Appeal.

Mr Rodi Neri has been appointed Human Resources Manager at the Howard Florey Institute and he will also provide consultation to the FNI about human resources issues.

Senior administrative staff from each amalgamating institute have continued to meet fortnightly to work through the intricacies of organisational integration.

### Schematic design approval

The Schematic Design Report and Cost Plan C1 for both facilities was approved by the Parkville and Austin project control groups in mid-May.



L to R: At the FNI's inaugural AGM were Graeme Jackson, Tammie Fraser and Samuel Berkovic.

The Report confirms design concepts and spaces, including floor plans and the exterior design of the buildings. The Cost Plan sets the approved scope of work and the budget.

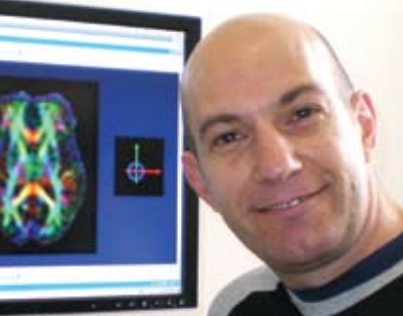
During the next stage, the design will be developed in detail, including equipment and furniture selection and layout, internal and external finishes, all engineering and other services, and construction details.

### The Parkville site

Demolition and clearing of the old Biochemistry building site at Parkville has finished, making way for the new building.

### The Austin site

To enable the old 3KZ building to be demolished to make way for the new building, planning is underway to relocate staff to other parts of the Austin campus. Demolition is scheduled for September.



Fernando Calamante

## Researcher Profile

**Dr Fernando Calamante**

Senior Research Fellow

Dr Calamante moved from the UK two years ago to work with the new Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) Development group at the Austin campus.

He is internationally recognised for his work on MRI technique development, particularly in the fields of diffusion and perfusion MRI. Dr Calamante's work focuses on assessing the limitations of current MRI tools, and developing ways to improve them.

Dr Calamante said his main aim was to provide more robust and accurate MRI tools for clinical and research applications.

"These tools are particularly useful for investigating brain disorders, such as epilepsy, stroke, tumours, and mental health disorders. Having two MRI scanners dedicated to research at the Austin campus significantly accelerates our development of these tools," he said.

# Experiencing mental illness through art

The new building at the University of Melbourne's Parkville campus will become home to one of the world's largest collections of creative works by people who have experienced mental illness and psychological trauma.

The Cunningham Dax Collection consists of around 12,000 creative pieces and is an innovative and engaging tool for learning about mental illness. High school and university students regularly participate in the Collection's education programs.

The Collection operates within the Mental Health Research Institute, which will also move to the new

building at Parkville. Housing the Collection at the Parkville campus will make it more accessible to the public and give visitors to the new building the opportunity of gaining a better understanding of mental illness.

Dr Eric Cunningham Dax, who passed away earlier this year a few months short of his 100th birthday, formally established the Collection

in 1987. Dr Dax was head of Victoria's mental health services during a period of great reform and innovation. His contributions include distinguishing the intellectually disabled from those with mental illness, and to a great extent, he abolished much of the stigma of 'mental illness'. Dr Dax also played a major role in founding art therapy as a discipline and profession.

## The Brain Appeal

**The Brain Appeal Committee, under the Chairmanship of Mr Harrison Young, is made up of people representing the Florey Neuroscience Institutes (FNI), the Mental Health Research Institute (MHRI), the University of Melbourne and Austin Health.**

The committee continues to seek donations to reach our target of \$225 million to construct and fully fit out the new buildings at the University of Melbourne and at the Austin Hospital.

Since the last newsletter the amount pledged has moved to \$172,200,000. We have received a very generous gift of \$1 million from a donor who wishes to remain anonymous and other very generous donations have been received from:

- Mr Graeme Bowker
- Mr JG Donaldson
- Ms Margaret Jackson AC
- Mr Mark Jones
- Mr Peter Jopling QC
- Mr Ian Renard
- Mr Robert Trenberth.

If you would like to make a tax deductible donation to the Brain Appeal or if you would like more information about this project or the FNI, please contact any member of the Brain Appeal Committee listed below:

- Mr Harrison Young, Appeal Chairman
- Mr Charles Allen AO, Chairman, FNI
- Mr Graeme Bowker
- Mr Trevor Clark
- Prof Geoff Donnan
- Dr Alan Finkel AM
- Mr Gary Gray, COO, FNI
- Prof Graeme Jackson
- Ms Margaret Jackson AC
- Mr Mark Jones
- Mr Bruce Kean AM, Chairman, MHRI
- Prof Colin Masters



Harrison Young, Chairman of the Brain Appeal Committee.

Prof Frederick Mendelsohn AO, Director, FNI

- Mr Martyn Myer
  - Mr Allan Myers AO QC
  - Mr Brendan Murphy, CEO, Austin Health
  - Mr Robert Trenberth
  - Mr John Wylie AC
  - Mr Ross Johnstone, Fundraising Manager, MHRI
  - Mr Alun Evans, Fundraising Director, FNI
- Or contact Alun Evans directly on (03) 8344 1629 or [alun.evans@florey.edu.au](mailto:alun.evans@florey.edu.au)

## FNI's first annual report

**The Florey Neuroscience Institutes' 2007 annual report is now available. To view the report online visit [www.florey.edu.au](http://www.florey.edu.au) or to receive a copy phone Margit Simondson on (03) 8344 1833.**

As the amalgamation of the Brain Research Institute, Howard Florey Institute and National Stroke Research Institute strengthened significantly in 2007, each institute's individual annual report will now be replaced by an FNI annual report. Future FNI annual reports will be on calendar year activities.



The Florey Neuroscience Institutes is the amalgamation of the Howard Florey Institute, the Brain Research Institute and the National Stroke Research Institute. Trust Foundation is a proud philanthropic supporter of the FNI newsletter. [www.trust.com.au](http://www.trust.com.au) +61 3 8344 1658

**trust**