Head of School's newsletter - February 2010

This is the first of what I hope will be a regular series of emails from me, as Head of School, as a means of keeping members of the School of Physics informed of recent news and developments in the School.

Deputy Head - Prof. Martijn de Sterke has agreed to continue in his role as Deputy Head of School. I am extremely grateful to Martijn for his continual support in this role.

Thanks - I would like to thank all those members of the School who assisted in the Info Day and Enrolment Days activities held in January. These are extremely important activities for the School and could not be undertaken with the enthusiastic involvement of staff and students from the School.

Promotions - Applications for this year's round of academic promotions are now open. Academic members of staff who are considering applying for promotion this year should discuss this further with me as Head of School.

Science Prizes - There are currently a number of science prizes that individuals may wish to apply for:

Fresh Science: http://www.freshscience.org.au  
Eureka Prizes: http://eureka.australianmuseum.net.au/enter  
Prime Minister's Prizes for Science: https://grants.innovation.gov.au/SciencePrize/Pages/Home.aspx

Members of staff who are considering nominating a colleague for one of these prizes may wish to discuss this further with me as Head of School.

Committees - There will be a number of changes to the School committees both in terms of structure and membership. One specific change to bring to your attention at this stage is the introduction of a monthly School Meeting for academic members of staff. This will be held from 12 noon to 1pm on the second Monday of each month with the first one being held in March. Notice of these meetings will be provided in due course. Twice-yearly requisite School Board meetings will continue to be held for all members of the School. The Professorial Advisory Committee will continue to meet but less frequently than before. The Academic Programs Committee will be streamlined and renamed the School Teaching and Learning Committee. As part of this change, each teaching year will have a Teaching and Learning Committee which will be concerned with curriculum development, pedagogy and quality standards for that year. More information will be provided in due course.

Main School Office - In continuing to implement the recommendations of last year's School Administration Review, the entrance to the Main School Office is being relocated to the old resource and mail room. This will allow the introduction of a counter service to assist the Office staff in undertaking their duties for the School. A new resource room for photocopies and printers etc has been created in room 211, the previous office of Phil Dooley and Lara Davis.

Office moves - There have been recent changes to the office location of staff. Paul Harbon has moved to room 219. Phil Dooley and Lara Davis have moved to Paul's old office, room 212. Adam Selinger has moved to room 209 and Alison Muir and Diana Londish have moved into room 219B. Brian James, Bob Hewitt and Ian Cooper to room 104 and Bill Tango to room 101 in the basement.

Undergraduate Review - It's 10 years since the last substantial review of the undergraduate syllabus was undertaken. A/Prof Manju Sharma will be chairing the review process which will be commenced in the near future and will continue during 2010 and into 2011 in conjunction with the Institute for Innovation in Science and Mathematics Education (IISM) which Manju is director of. The aim is to implement any changes to our teaching programs by Semester 1, 2012. This may appear to be a rather long time scale but it is essential that a robust review is undertaken to ensure the School is positioned to ensure that our teaching program is appropriate and of the highest quality for the next 10 years and beyond.
Technical Services Review - a review of the School's technical services will commence in the near future. This review will establish the requirements of the School from 2010 onwards. Further details will be circulated in due course.

Honorary staff - A policy is being developed for honorary, adjunct, conjoint and retired staff and their continuing role and relationship with the School. These colleagues play an important role in the life of the School and it's important that School acknowledges this through the development of updated policies and procedures.

Community Engagement - A new School committee has been formed to try and capture and enhance all our community engagement activities. As part of this process Alison Muir's job title has changed to Alumni Relations Manager to better reflect this very important activity in the School. Among other things, Alison's role will be to ensure that news items that reflect the wide range of activities undertaken in the School are reported regularly under the School News section on the School web pages. All staff are strongly encouraged to submit news stories regularly to Alison.

Science Foundation for Physics - There are a number of Science Foundation for Physics activities being planned. A Prof. Harry Messel Tribute event will be held in the Great Hall in May and all School of Physics staff are encouraged to attend. Further details will be circulated in due course. Plans are well underway for next year's International Science School, ISS 2010 which will have the theme of light.

A green paper on the future structure of the University will be published in the very near future. This will possibly have implications for the School. We face many challenges in the coming year as we await the decision from the Federal government as to whether we will be getting a new building to replace A29 giving us additional research laboratories and teaching facilities. The School continues to grow in numbers of students and staff as a reflection of our continual success. We are looking forward to the outcome of the various applications for ARC Centres of Excellence that the School is associated with.

I wish you all well with your endeavours in 2010 and look forward to working with you all as your new Head of School.