It is with pleasure that I write my first Head of School newsletter for 2011. The School of Physics was very successful in both teaching and research in 2010 and we look forward to 2011 with much anticipation to continued success in 2011.

Remembrance - Dr Nicolae Nicorovici sadly passed away before Christmas. Nicolae first worked with Ross McPhedran as an ARC Research Associate in the School in 1991 and had been employed either at Sydney or UTS ever since. His current status had been as a part-time ARC Research Associate. He is well known to many of those in Theoretical Physics and CUDOS. Nicolae was known internationally for the quality and thoroughness of his scientific research. He was an indispensable element of the groups at the University of Sydney and the University of Technology Sydney, where he was referred to as the "Rumanian Oracle". He was a friendly and committed scientist and a warm and life-loving man, whose passing will be deeply regretted by many, including his partner Stephanie Peschek and step-son Florian Remus.

Sadly Graham Derrick and John Bennett also recently passed away. Both had been significant individuals during their time in the School of Physics in past years. Further details of their lives and careers will be made available on the News section of the School Web site.

Deputy Head - Prof. Martijn de Sterke will continue in the role of Deputy Head in 2011. I would like to thank Martijn for his continual support in this role.

Associate Heads - I am pleased to announce that A/Prof John O'Byrne and Prof Geraint Lewis have accepted the positions of Associate Heads for Teaching and Research respectively. These new administrative positions in the School have been created to reflect the growth in the School in recent years. As well as chairing the relevant School committees both John and Geraint will assist in developing relevant School policies. Whilst John will continue to chair the School Teaching and Learning Committee, Geraint has taken over from Prof Don Melrose, the previous chair of the Research Committee. I would like to thank Don for undertaking this role and for leading the mentoring of ARC grant applicants in the School over many years.

Occupational Health and Safety - A/Prof Joe Khachan has taken over from Prof Marcela Bilek as chair of the School OH&S Policy Committee. I would like to thank Marcela for undertaking this role in 2010.

Information Technology - Iver Cairns will continue chairing the School IT Committee

Promotion - Academic staff who intend to apply for promotion in 2011 should contact the Head of School for further guidance before proceeding. This is important as the promotion process has changed from 2011. A central information session for intending applicants in 2011 will be held on at 1.30pm on Monday 28 February in the Peter Nicol Russell Lecture Theatre. The information session is designed to assist applicants in preparing their application for Promotion in 2011. The session will be chaired by the Provost & Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor Stephen Garton, and will include presentations from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education), Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), Chair of the Academic Board, Assistant Director (EEO Unit) and an applicant who was successful to Level C in 2010.

ARC Grant Mentoring - A mentoring session will be held, as in previous years to assist in the preparation of ARC grants. Further information will be circulated in due course by the new Associate Head for Research.

New Building - Significant progress continues to be made regarding the new building. In December the Senate approved the business case for the new building. Agreement was subsequently reached with DIISR (Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research) allowing for the contractual agreement covering the payment of the EIF funding for this project to take place. The first Milestone Report for the project funding has been submitted to DIISR. The design consultants, DEGW continue to have regular meetings with the stakeholders to develop the Design Brief for the building. A call for Expressions of
Interest has been made to engage architects and the detailed tender and assessment progress for the architectural firms shortlisted will commence soon. The Project User Group (PUG), Project Control Group (PCG) and Executive Steering Committee (ESC) continue to meet regularly as the project develops. Discussions are continuing with the University regarding the timing and space requirements for when A29 has to be decanted.

Office Moves and Other Building Works - With the continued growth in the School and success of recent funding of ARC Centres of Excellence and their associated nodes, a number of staff and students are relocating to different offices within the School. All staff and students are thanked for their understanding during this time of change. As part of this process, from Semester 1 the 1st year tutorial activities previously undertaken in Room 320 are being relocated to Room 331 in Madsen as a result of successful negotiations with the School of Geosciences. Room 320 will be converted to offices over the coming weeks, as will the two Level 6 tower rooms at the Eastern End of A28. Progress continues to be made on the new toilets and lift in A28 with the current completion time for these early April and July respectively. CIS, who are managing these projects, has been asked to fast track this work. Plans are also underway to refurbish the Student Services Office on Level 2 of A28 in the near future.