

# DIRECTOR'S REPORT



Professor Jonathan Stone, Director.

This year was one of growth in our research mission, amidst structural and administrative change. The growth in research was considerable, increasing our DEST-listable publications and overall budget by 30% over the last several years. The School has shared, in some respects led, the campus-wide growth which has occurred in the University in these years. The award during 2005 of two Centres of Excellence (in Vision Science and Plant Energy Biology) with major nodes at the School will consolidate this growth for some considerable time.

Less quantifiable, but at least as important, there has been intellectual growth. Several of our research groups are rewriting their futures, and redirecting resources as they become available, to take on new challenges. The Centres of Excellence (RSBS currently hosts nodes of five, and is or will be the managing node of two Centres) also contribute to the addressing of new scientific challenges, from the fundamental biology of plants, to the function of the brain, the genetic basis of evolution and development, and degenerative diseases of the human nervous system.

Structural change has stemmed from the Institute of Advanced Studies transition to eligibility for funding from the major grant agencies. At the beginning of this process, approximately 80% of our funding was derived from the Institute Block Grant. This year, with the transition complete, approximately 50% of our funding came from that source. The trend seems likely to continue, given trends in Federal Government allocations to the Block Grant on the one hand and to the ARC and NHMRC on the other, and part of our challenge is to maintain the quality and distinctiveness of our research, with this new mix of funding.

Administrative change has come from the University, with the launch this year of the College re-organisation of campus structures, to begin in 2006 and be in full operation in 2007. RSBS staff have taught in undergraduate courses for many years; scientific collaboration between the School and Faculty groups has been part of our life for many years; and two years ago the School initiated a Memorandum of Understanding with the Faculty of Science, to share with the Faculty the success of our postgraduate training program, which benefits from the Faculty's undergraduate training programs. These initiatives anticipated the spirit and aim of the Colleges, so that the School will be able to move smoothly to the College structure, and to contribute to it. Administrative change also came in the School's central administration, undertaken with two aims, improved equity in the workplace, and improved productivity and efficiency. There has been considerable progress towards both aims.

Growth in the School's infrastructure continued during the year, with the approval of funding for a PC2 glasshouse facility, and the detailed development of plans for a PC2 extension. The glasshouse facility will surely be completed in 2006, and other plans will be advanced. We continue to build and equip infrastructure within the School, in the Molecular Biology and Mass Spectrometry facilities and, though it is a University unit, the Electron Microscope Facility, which will acquire a new scanning electron microscope next year.

Each year brings individual honours. This year I note with pleasure that Dr Chow was recognized as an ISI Citation Laureate, and Professor Graves was awarded the Burnet Medal of the Academy of Science, for achievement in biological science.

Finally, I must thank all staff for their work and support during a challenging year. Challenges remain, but our intellectual, financial and administrative resources have been strengthened, and I look forward to the new year with confidence.