

## Science Teachers' Association of Victoria

### STAV Annual Report

1st July 2014 – 30th June 2015

#### President's Overview

STAV continues to function as a viable entity drawing its membership from educators across the Primary and Secondary sectors, Pre-Service teachers, researchers, retired teachers and individuals with an interest in science education. The past year has provided STAV with a platform to engage in the STEM discourse both at a state and national level and it was pleasing to see that the Victorian Government has emphasised the importance of education and has made Victoria the Education State. A discussion paper was subsequently released highlighting a seamless transition across sectors resulting in 'STEM Plan'. We await the government's 'STEM Plan' with a particular interest on the school sector and the implications this has on the teaching and learning of science.

Discussions were also held regarding the new VCE Study Designs, with meetings run across the state led by the VCAA.

It is appropriate that I acknowledge the 2014 STAV Councillors, who have volunteered their time to meet throughout the year and to represent the collective voice of science educators across the state and nationally at the various round table discussions, council meetings and conferences. The 2015 STAV Councillors are as follows: Joanna Alexander (Vermont Secondary), Alexandra Abela (Penleigh and Essendon Grammar School), Michael Rosenbrock (Wodonga Secondary College) Yuvadee Patchon (Lab Tech Quantum Victoria), Jacinta Greer (Whittlesea Secondary College), Leonie McGlashan (Keysborough Secondary) and Suzanne O'Shannessy (Public Officer).

All councillors have renominated for the 2016 Council. I would like to acknowledge the work and effort undertaken by STAV Council throughout their term and sincerely thank all councillors for their contribution to the teaching and learning of Science, along with the STAV Secretariat led by Annette McKenna and Suzanne O'Shannessy.

STAV is a not for profit member association and is governed by a Council and is supported by the paid STAV staff.

STAV's goals are to:

- Establish and maintain both financial and intellectual independence
- Represent the collective voice of science educators in Victoria
- Influence policy formulation in relation in matters relating to Science Education
- Support and maintain special interest groups within STAV
- Provide a range of resources and services to support science educators
- Provide for and encourage student participation in a range of challenging science activities
- Promote the importance of science education to the community

- Recognise significant contributions by STAV members to Science Education.

We have continued to ensure that all activities conducted throughout the financial year were aligned with the STAV goals.

### **STAV Publications**

Publishing our quarterly editions of **Lab Talk and Let's Find Out** has continued to be a priority with most targets being met. Articles were sourced by regular and new contributors.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all contributors to both our journals and would like to encourage STAV members to share their best practice through published articles.

The monthly publication **Contact** continues to be published online.

Our team of exam writers continue to produce **Trial Exams** in support of the VCE Science subjects on offer. Trial Exams were issued on time to all schools purchasing the resource. We have continued to offer both a mid-year and end of year exam, which has been welcomed by schools.

We continue to publish the **Science Coordinator's and Beginning Teacher's Handbooks**.

### **Conferences & Workshops**

STAV members continue to have access to the largest number of professional learning opportunities offered by a Science Teachers' Association in the nation. The following conferences were hosted during the reported period:

**STAVCON** was hosted at La Trobe University and attracted over 600 delegates. The feedback received continues to be very positive and the shift from running the conference across two days to one day has been welcomed by teachers who have expressed difficulty in being released for both days.

The **VCE Conferences** were well attended with numbers higher for all three conferences than the previous year. We began the year with **Physics and the PIGS (Physics in General Science 7-10) Conference** hosted at Monash University, followed by the **Biology Conference** and finishing with **Chemistry**, with the latter two conferences hosted at La Trobe University. Delegates were addressed at each conference by a VCAA representative who informed them of updates and the pending changes to the Study Designs.

The **Lab Tech Conference** hosted at Quantum Victoria is growing each year and attracted over 100 delegates. The emphasis was on the use of data loggers and ICT in the science classroom along with OH&S issues.

**CONASTA 63 "The Human Faces of Science"** was hosted in Adelaide at the University of Adelaide, attracting delegates from across Australia. It was disappointing that both the Nobel Laureate, Professor Brian Schmidt and Australia's Chief Scientist, Professor Ian Chubb were unable to present their respective keynotes as advertised, but the organisers were able to replace the scheduled keynotes with local experts within their respective fields.

The **ICT Conference** did not run in 2014 because it did not attract the minimum number of delegates. The conference will be rebadged and reviewed for 2015.

Dr Christina Hart delivered three **Physics workshops** (with one repeated) for Primary and Secondary teachers at STAV House and received positive feedback illustrating the need for continued support in this area.

Helen Silvester delivered **four Primary Science Workshops** at STAV House which continue to receive very positive feedback and support.

## **Curriculum**

### **VCAA**

Updates on the proposed changes to the VCE Study Designs along with the Australian Curriculum were provided to all delegates attending STAVCON and the VCE Conferences. Teachers had access to information via online sessions, face-to-face sessions throughout May and were also encouraged to provide written feedback regarding the changes to the Senior Years Science Study Designs.

### **Pre-Service Teachers**

We continue to engage with Pre-Service teachers informing them of the benefits of joining STAV as a beginning teacher, and having access to a community and collective voice that supports and influences the teaching and learning of science education both at a state and national level.

### **ASTA**

STAV continues to participate in the governance of ASTA through its representation on ASTA Council. STAV representatives (President and Vice President) have pursued the importance of ASTA having a prominent national presence to ensure consultation occurs in important initiatives such as the Australian Curriculum, STEM in schools and other projects funded by the Federal Government in which Victorian teachers can access. STAV representatives participated in two face-to-face Council Meetings (November and July) and 4 teleconferences throughout the year.

### **Social Media**

STAV Facebook and Twitter accounts have continued to promote events and share information to STAV Members and the wider community. We thank the continued diligence of our Social Media Liaison Officer, Carlie Alexander who has facilitated this communication with members.

### **DET**

November 2014 saw a change of government in Victoria, with the incoming government emphasising the importance of education and STEM. STAV has continued to enter into dialogue with the DET representatives in seeking support for Professional Learning of Science teachers across the state along with the Science Talent Search.

### **Science Talent Search**

The STS Management and Committee along with Janice Teng have continued to support the STAV Science Talent Search (STS), attracting interest in all categories. We had over 2,600 participants, their teachers and families celebrating on Exhibition Day at La Trobe University. 2015 saw 30 Victorian students being awarded for their projects in the prestigious National BHP Billiton Science and Engineering Awards. These included 15 Primary Encouragement Awards, 9 Semi-finalists, 5 Finalists and 1 Primary winner. Three Victorian students were placed 1st, 2nd and 3rd in the Engineering category, which is an unprecedented result! We also had two Victorian finalists in the Investigations section.

### **Science Drama Awards**

The STAV Science Drama Awards were held once again at Canterbury Girls' Secondary College with entries from both regional and metropolitan Primary and Secondary schools. We acknowledge and thank Jan Campione and the other committee members for their continued efforts and congratulate the primary and secondary winners and all participating students and their teachers.

**National Science Week**

Schools continued to receive financial support to run programs during National Science Week in August. This year's theme was *'Making Waves – The Science of Light'*.

**Financial Management**

The deficit has been significantly reduced from \$59, 137 to \$2,219, a reduction of \$56,918. It is pleasing to see that the strategies implemented by STAV Council have been effective. STAV Council is further committed to reducing this deficit so that we experience a surplus in the next financial year.

STAV continues to maintain a presence both at the state and national arenas and continues its work with the following partners:

Australian Science Teachers' Association (ASTA)

Deans of Science from the Universities of Victoria

Deans of Education from La Trobe University, the University of Melbourne and Monash University

Australian Academy of Science

Australia's Chief Scientist

BHP Billiton (Student and Teacher Awards)

Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL)

**Soula Bennett**

**STAV President**