



A time of transformational change at Neuroscience Research Australia

This year is a time of transformational change at Neuroscience Research Australia (NeuRA), driven by the evolving impact of brain disorders on the health needs of our community and the changing operating environment for research and research funding.

In June this year, the NeuRA Board of Directors was refreshed. Work on a new organisational strategy (2022-2024) was completed and approved by the Board. This will see a much sharper focus on neurodegeneration, mental health and ageing well; an emphasis on clinical outcomes; and a search for partnerships which can enable greater scale and impact.

I would now like to advise that after over 18 years of exemplary service to NeuRA, Professor Peter R Schofield AO will be stepping down from his role as Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director at the end of the year. He will hold an honorary appointment and continue his research activities at the institute.

Professor Schofield joined the institute in 2004, succeeding Prof Ian McCloskey as the founding Executive Director and CEO. Since that time, he has implemented an expansive vision that has transformed the original Prince of Wales Medical Research Institute into the vibrant institute we see today.

Notable highlights of his nearly two-decade tenure include:

- Expanding the research footprint of the institute to include both laboratory and clinical research in ageing and neurodegenerative disorders and in mental health in 2004.
- The award of NSW Government funding that enabled the recruitment of Prof Cyndi Shannon Weickert as the NSW Chair of Schizophrenia Research in 2006.
- Establishing the NeuRA Foundation, which has raised over \$75M to date in support NeuRA's research programs in 2007.
- Securing a \$30M Commonwealth Government grant in 2007 to enable the expansion of the institute's research facilities.
- Rebranding the institute as Neuroscience Research Australia (NeuRA) in 2010.
- The conception and delivery of the \$74M Margarete Ainsworth Building, which was made possible by securing major Commonwealth and State government grants along with substantial philanthropic support, in particular from Mrs Ainsworth, the Serpentine Foundation and many other donors. The Margarete Ainsworth Building was opened in 2013.
- The successful merger of the Schizophrenia Research Institute with NeuRA in 2015.
- Creating a major corporate partnership with Transurban and establishing in 2017 the Transurban Road Safety Centre which houses the only research dedicated crash test facility in Australia.
- The recruitment of many outstanding research leaders who have developed their careers at NeuRA, including in 2017 the recruitment of Prof Kaarin Anstey to lead an innovative national research agenda on Ageing and Dementia.

- Securing funding from NSW Health and developing a partnership with South Eastern Sydney Local Health District to pilot the delivery of a Tertiary Referral Service for Psychosis, which has been refunded by government.
- Supporting IP protection and commercialisation activity with our StableEyes technology having been spun out into a US based start-up EyeEquilibrium Inc in 2021.
- The growth of the institute from 120 to over 300 staff, income from \$8M to over \$40M, and assets from \$10M to over \$100M.
- The development and adoption of the current Strategic Plan.
- The appointment of Prof Carolyn Sue AM as the inaugural Kinghorn Chair, Neurodegeneration. This key achievement is the first step in implementation of our new strategy.

In addition, Professor Schofield has made major contributions to the Randwick Health and Innovation Precinct and to Australian health and medical research. Selected examples include:

- One of the founders of the Australasian Course for Advance Neuroscience, an intensive three-week course that commenced in 2005 and teaches both advanced theory and hands-on-practice of latest neuroscience techniques.
- Serving as a Member of the Commonwealth Government's Legislation Review Committee examining the Prohibition of Human Cloning and Research Involving Human Embryos Acts. Following the Committee Chair's untimely death, working closely with Senator Stott-Despoja and Senator Patterson, whose private Members' Bill succeeded in having the vast majority of the Committee's recommendations become law.
- A founding Director of The Health-Science Alliance, the Randwick Hub entity since 2018.
- Chair of the National Medical Advisory Panel of the Mason Foundation since 2015.
- Serving as Interim Director of the NHMRC National Institute for Dementia Research (2016-2017), in addition to his NeuRA CEO role.
- Securing the \$7M Commonwealth government grant in 2018 that helped to establish the Mindgardens Neuroscience Network and serving with Prof Helen Christensen as Joint Interim CEOs (2018-2020), in addition to his NeuRA CEO role.
- Director of the Association of Australian Medical Research Institutes (AAMRI) since 2019.
- President of the Australasian Neuroscience Society in 2020-2022.
- Inaugural Chair of the NSW Chapter of the Association of Australian Medical Research Institutes (AAMRI) in 2022.

On top of all these achievements, Professor Schofield has always found time for his own enormously productive research. Some highlights include:

- Authoring over 300 high impact research publications which have attracted over 30,000 citations and the supervision of 12 PhD students.
- As site leader of one of the 10 founding sites of the US NIH-funded Dominantly Inherited Alzheimer Network which demonstrated the definitive order of biomarker changes that present up to 25 years prior to clinical onset. Based on this the NIH have continuously refunded the DIAN study and have funded large-scale clinical trials, in which we partner, seeking treatments to prevent Alzheimer's.
- Participation in numerous international collaborative studies which have revealed the genetic contributors to bipolar disorder, provided insights into mode of action of the key mood stabilising drug lithium, and our understanding of brain structure and function through imaging and genomics studies.
- Being a Chief Investigator on numerous NHMRC, ARC and other competitive grants worth almost \$50M, most notably the NHMRC Program Grant on Depressive and Bipolar Disorders,

the NHMRC National Dementia Network Grant establishing the Australian Dementia Network (ADNeT) and an NHMRC Leadership Investigator Grant.

During his tenure at NeuRA, two personal recognitions of Professor Schofield's research and community contributions are especially salient. The first was his election to Fellowship of the Australia Academy of Health and Medical Sciences in 2015 and the second was his appointment in 2019 as an Officer (AO) of the Order of Australia for distinguished service to medical and scientific research in the field of neuroscience, and to professional institutions.

Professor Schofield will remain in his current role until the end of December 2022. The Board has launched its search for a new CEO and has asked Ms Carole Renouf (currently Executive Director, NeuRA Foundation) to serve as Interim CEO as of 1 January 2023.

Please join me in congratulating Professor Schofield for his truly extraordinary contribution to the life, growth and identity of our institute, as well as for advancing a vision for cross-campus partnerships on which we can build into the future. We look forward to hosting a celebration in December to acknowledge the many significant milestones he has generated for NeuRA.

We wish Professor Schofield all the very best in his future endeavours and thank him for always acting in the best interests of the institute.

Sincere regards,
James MacNevin
Chair
Neuroscience Research Australia