

## Executive Director's Report – George Owen

The Federal Government through the Department of Health & Ageing has renewed funding to StepAhead for the next three years. This is an excellent outcome for us all and it confirms that what we have done to date has met the requirements of the Department and underlines the status of StepAhead in the search for a treatment. Particularly, it doubles our resolve that we push ahead with the mission of StepAhead to promote and fund the translation of research into the clinical outcome.

It is with this in mind that the upcoming Scientific Meeting in November has as its theme “The Road to Treatment”. The program will be open to anyone of you or your family who wish to attend. We will draw together experts from around the world who are actually applying their research and that of others, to the treatment program. Those that are conducting, or about to conduct clinical trials will be present, so mark it down in your diary for the middle week of November, at the end of Spinal Cord Awareness Week which runs from the 9<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup>. At this time you can meet and directly question the scientists and clinicians involved. You can hear about the work being undertaken around the world and with your support we can push further for these activities to come to Australia. The New Zealand team that are well advanced in plans for a clinical trial will be present, along with clinical researchers from North and South America.

Some of you may have noticed a press release from the Australian Stem Cell Centre which announced the resolution of differences between Dr Stephen Livesey and Dr Kathy Triainedes with the Stem Cell Centre. This dispute had delayed the project we had underway in partnership between the Australian Stem Cell Centre and the Reds Spinal Laboratory in WA. Both Stephen & Kathy have moved their research programme to St. Vincents Hospital in Melbourne. This is a big advance for us because it puts them within the clinical context of a clinical trial under the department of Professor Mark Cook. Professor Cook is a most enthusiastic supporter of the need to go to clinical trial and he has the neurosurgical team to back his enthusiasm. Our other project which is taking place using the anti scaring agent Decorin in rat models, is on time and progressing well. These studies are supportive of the next step, which is to apply these results in a clinical trial.

Funding still remains our major concern and probably always will. Economic downturn has certainly had an effect on the corporate supporters we have had in the past. I am sure that with a properly constructed awareness trial, the public will open their pockets and donate once they come to know of the profound disabilities and disadvantages those with spinal cord injury suffer from on a daily basis. We only have to look at the response to the Black Friday appeal where \$300 million was raised. Our request would be much more modest. Just one tenth of that would see us well placed to start the critical work required. You can be assured that with the Government funding for Administration, all monies donated go towards research.

Some of you will have noticed that our website is under reconstruction and I think you will be pleased with the result which is soon to be open to the public.

George Owen  
Executive Director, SAA

## Other News

### WEBSITE

You may have noticed that our website [www.stepahead.org.au](http://www.stepahead.org.au) is being updated. The new improved version will be available for viewing shortly.

### FUNDRAISING NEWS



#### **Race Day - Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 2009**

Our Annual Race Day will be held at Flemington Racecourse on Turnbull Stakes Day, Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 2009. This day is thoroughly enjoyed by all and we hope to see you there.

We would love to hear from any one who could donate a product or service to be raffled or auctioned on the day. All donations are greatly received and obviously add to the final amount we are able to raise.

If you can support this day, please contact Jeni and Alan Franklin on (03) 9874 2101 or via email at [jenala8@bigpond.net.au](mailto:jenala8@bigpond.net.au) .