

**President's Report, AGM of the Australasian Speech Science and Technology
Association,
13th December 2023 online only**

2023 has been an eventful year for ASSTA with members attending two major international conferences in Europe. It was fantastic to reconnect with old friends after the pandemic hiatus and to see so many of you at these important meetings. ASSTA provided support for ten students and ECR members via the **ASSTA Conference Travel Awards scheme** to attend one or both of ICPHS in Prague and INTERSPEECH in Dublin. In order to allow members to attend both conferences with ASSTA support, we waived the condition of a single ASSTA award per year. This helped our students and ECRs take advantage of these two conferences so closely located in time and place. We also facilitated students attending the joint Acoustical Society of America and the Australian Acoustical Society meetings (Acoustics Sydney) in December this year by waiving the requirement that only overseas conferences are eligible for the **Conference Travel Awards** scheme. The awardees for our travel grants to attend ICPHS, INTERSPEECH and other international conferences were Eylum Altuntas Jessica Chin, Angelo Dian, Canaan Lan, Shubo Li, Yanping Li, Shuting Liu, Louise Ratko, Mostafa Shahin, Tuende Szalay and Hannah White.

A unique opportunity became available in 2023 to provide a \$1000 travel award to an eligible member who had been accepted to present a paper at ICPHS 2023 in Prague. The **ASSTA Special ICPHS2023 Student/ECR Travel Award** was made available through the generous donation from a previous ICPHS student/ECR winner who gifted their prize back to ASSTA. This award was extremely competitive with a very high level of submissions. The successful recipient was Angelo Dian for his paper 'Preaspiration in Italian voiceless geminate and singleton stops'. Congratulations Angelo.

ASSTA is committed to supporting our community and we provide funding through a range of grants, other than the **Conference Travel Awards** mentioned above, including the **New Researcher Awards Scheme** (for SST conference support), **Special Initiative Awards** (for national high-level initiatives), the **Carer Support Scheme** (for supporting carers to attend national and international conferences), and the **ASSTA Research Event Awards** of up to \$5000 to support groundwork meetings (for setting up new or strengthening existing research collaborations) and for seminars or workshops on particular themes. Please encourage your colleagues and students to join ASSTA to take advantage of the support programs available.

While at INTERSPEECH, I met a group of students from Australia working on speech technology who were not aware of ASSTA. Of course I let them know about the benefits of membership and our awards program. This reminded me that we need to work harder to promote our association and encourage membership from a wider range of student populations. During 2024 the Executive will consider strategies to engage with speech science and technology students and researchers to generate awareness of ASSTA. I also encourage those of you with industry connections to ask us about corporate memberships.

This year ASSTA has made progress in our plan to ensure accessibility and governance of the AusTalk corpus. I am pleased to tell you that we have signed a formal memorandum of agreement with Western Sydney University (WSU) who has agreed to store and host AusTalk, while ASSTA will take on the formal role of data steward. We are still in discussions with the Language Data Commons of Australia (LDaCA) to provide a portal for access to the AusTalk corpus.

The 18th Australasian International Speech Science and Technology Conference (SST2022) was held at ANU in December 2022 and was a huge success thanks to the organising committee led by Rosey Billington. As one of the first face to face meetings after the pandemic, delegates were delighted to return to a sense of normality after missing this

important meeting in our calendar in 2020. ASSTA is very excited that the 19th SST will be held in Melbourne from 2nd to 5th December 2024 under the direction of Olga Maxwell and a highly experienced and enthusiastic organising committee. The call for papers will go out soon, so start planning your SST papers now. Remember SST papers are categorised as full paper refereed conference publications (category E1).

As we have previously announced, ASSTA has been awarded the honour of hosting INTERSPEECH in Sydney from 28th September to 1st October 2026 with the timely theme of Diversity & Equity - Speaking Together. We have assembled an exceptional team to join our organising committee and we have received a generous support package from all levels of government. INTERSPEECH in 2026 promises to be a major event for ASSTA as it will raise awareness of the important phonetic, speech science and speech technology research being conducted in our region.

The Forensic Speech Sciences Committee of ASSTA has been active in expanding their membership with a view to broadening their expertise base. Collaboration with the Research Hub for Language in Forensic Evidence led by Helen Fraser provides an important opportunity for basic and applied research and advocacy in forensic speech science.

I'm sure you'll agree that the ASSTA Newsletter is bigger and better than ever under the editorship of Jesin James. Thanks for taking charge of the ASSTA Newsletter Jesin. We look forward to contributing to the next edition in 2024.

The ECR/PG network has been very active and continues to support a vibrant and engaged community of new researchers/students. Thanks to Louise Ratko and Josh Penney for leading this initiative under the mentorship of Sasha Calhoun. All students and ECR members are encouraged to get involved and take advantage of the opportunity to discuss all manner of issues affecting new researchers. Get help with tricky R code, support for challenging stats, presentation tips, ideas for conference support, how to deal with negative conference experiences and reviewer feedback, experimental design ideas, and general emotional support. The ECR/PG network is a place to share achievements/milestones and support each other when some things (inevitably) don't go as planned.

Don't forget we have a social media presence. We are closing our Twitter account (@realASSTA) on Dec 31, but we have opened a LinkedIn page so please start following us there, and send through details of your accepted papers, events, presentations, lab news etc so we can spread the word.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the ASSTA Executive (Sasha Calhoun, Debbie Loakes, Olga Maxwell, Michael Proctor and Louise Ratko) for their hard work and dedication. Our membership continues to grow and the Executive take the task of supporting our community very seriously. If you have suggestions for how we can make improvements please let us know.

Congratulations to all members for your achievements this year. I look forward to working with you all to build a bigger and better ASSTA and continue our mission to advocate for and support speech science and technology research in Australasia. Thank you for the opportunity to represent you. I am grateful for your continued commitment to ASSTA.

I wish you a very happy and relaxing holiday season.

Felicity Cox
ASSTA President
13th December 2023