

President's Report
AGM of the Australasian Speech Science and Technology Association,
4th December 2024 4.30pm AEDT

As we reach the end of another highly productive year for ASSTA, it is time to reflect on all that we have achieved individually and collectively. We are a small but impactful association, and we definitely punch above our weight in terms of our outputs and successes. Congratulations to members who have been awarded external and internal research funding, to those who have had books, papers, and chapters published and who have disseminated the cutting-edge results of their labours at conferences and meetings. I particularly acknowledge those of you who continue to deliver course materials to inspire and empower the next generation of speech scientists. I encourage you to celebrate your efforts in teaching alongside your research achievements. Congratulations to student members who have successfully progressed or completed their research degrees. The path to academic success is never without challenges. Seeking support from peers, supervisors and mentors is a critical part of the process.

ASSTA is committed to supporting members through our various awards and grant schemes. The **New Researcher Awards Scheme** is presented to the best ECR/student paper submitted to SST with a cash prize of \$750 and a conference dinner ticket. In 2024 there were four submissions for the prestigious New Researcher Award, with the winner will be announced at the conference dinner.

ASSTA **Conference Travel Awards** of \$500 each are offered to help ECR or student members with cost associated with presenting peer-reviewed papers at overseas conferences. Three major conferences have been chosen for funding: ICASSP, INTERSPEECH and ICPHS. Funding for other conferences may also be considered, with preference for full paper review, subject to funding being available and dependent on the quality of the submission. Congratulations to **Angelo Dian, Feng Xu, Joy Mills and Zhang Xiangyu** who received Conference Travel Awards in 2024. **Special Initiative Awards** and **Carer Support Scheme** also provide funding support. **Justine Hui** received an ASSTA carers support award this year. Please encourage colleagues and students to join ASSTA to take advantage of the various support programs available.

The **ASSTA Research Event Awards** are offered for up to \$5000 each to support groundwork meetings, new research collaborations, or thematic seminars/workshops. This year the SocioPhon Aus4 Workshop on Sociophonetic Variability in the English Varieties of Australia has been supported by an ASSTA Research Event Award and will be held at SST 2024.

ASSTA's support for members comes from income generated from memberships, investments and small profits that may be achieved through ASSTA sponsored conferences. In 2026 ASSTA is honoured to be hosting INTERSPEECH at the International Convention Centre in Sydney from 28th September to 1st October. INTERSPEECH is the annual flagship conference of the International Speech Communication Association (ISCA) and the premiere speech communication science and technology conference in the world, attracting around 2000 delegates over 5 days. Several satellite workshops and a Scientific and Industrial Exhibition will enrich the conference content. Our theme Diversity & Equity—Speaking Together is intentionally multifaceted. It strongly reflects Australasia's rich linguistic history and that of our broader region, including an extensive range of under-resourced languages. The theme also highlights the need to address the inequalities that arise due to diminished health and accessibility in society. A central goal of INTERSPEECH 2026 will be to encourage and accelerate multidisciplinary initiatives that support speech and language technologies to become more inclusive, better informed, and representative. INTERSPEECH in 2026 will be a major event for ASSTA and we encourage members to get involved in the conference organisation. If you are interested in being part of INTERSPEECH 2026 in any organisational capacity, please get in touch. We anticipate that SST 2026 will be held in conjunction with INTERSPEECH in Sydney.

ASSTA continues to discuss how best to provide access to ASSTA-supported corpora such as ANDOSL and AusTalk. We have been in negotiations with the Language Data Commons of Australia (LDA) group, headed by Michael Haugh, to provide a portal for access to the AusTalk corpus but further work is necessary to bring this to fruition. We are hopeful that the ASSTA website can be utilised in some capacity as we develop strategies to support access to these important resources. We welcome input from the ASSTA community about optimal solutions to enhance access.

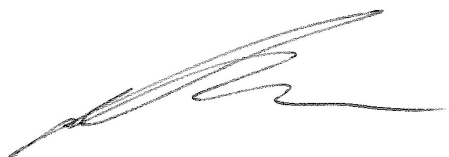
Earlier this year La Trobe University put forward a plan to “refocus” the staffing complement in their Linguistics program which would have dire consequences for senior staff and the Linguistics discipline more generally. In response to this plan, ASSTA sent a submission to La Trobe University’s Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences Professor Nick Bisley to advocate for our discipline and support ASSTA members at La Trobe. Unfortunately, our letter of support along with many other submissions was unsuccessful in affecting the University decision. We send our continued support to those affected by La Trobe University’s decision in this matter.

In April our ASSTA ECR representative Louise Ratko took up a new position outside the Higher Education sector. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Louise for her contribution to the ECR/PG network and to the ASSTA Executive. At short notice Hannah White stepped in to fill this vacancy and has been a highly engaged replacement member and I thank her for her service which has been greatly appreciated. The new ECR representative will be announced at the AGM. ASSTA has a vibrant community of ECR and student members who support each other through the ECR/PG network. Hannah has been leading this initiative since Louise’s departure with Sasha Calhoun as the facilitator. I encourage ECR/PG members to get involved and take advantage of the valuable mentoring and peer support available through the group.

My heartfelt thanks to Olga Maxwell and the SST 2024 organising committee for mounting such a successful conference. It is wonderful to have everyone back in Melbourne for this important meeting. I’m delighted that Rosey Billington has been given the honour of delivering the inaugural Anne Cutler Lecture. Anne was a staunch advocate for women in science, a fierce and formidable ASSTA supporter and a generous mentor to junior researchers. Her legacy will be celebrated through this event. It is also pertinent that the other three keynote addresses at SST 2024 will be delivered by talented women in science (Marija Tabain, Sasha Calhoun, and for SocioPhonAus4, Lynn Clark).

I’d like to take this opportunity to thank the ASSTA Executive (Sasha Calhoun, Debbie Loakes, Olga Maxwell, Michael Proctor and Hannah White) for their hard work and dedication to the ASSTA community and to you for your continued support of ASSTA. I look forward to working with you all as we strive to build the ASSTA community and consider innovative ways to support and expand speech science and technology research in Australasia. I am honoured to represent you, and I am grateful for your kindness and support.

I wish you a very happy and relaxing holiday season.



Felicity Cox
ASSTA President