

# Franklin Women

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## January 2017 Newsletter

It has been 1½ years in the making but today it is with great excitement and pride that I can announce, on behalf of the Franklin Women team, the launch of the [Franklin Women Mentoring Program](#) – Hoorah! As our followers know, it is a small but passionate team of health and medical researchers who volunteer their time to coordinate Franklin Women. Because our resources are limited, we introduce new FW activities only after much consideration and when we're confident they will meet a need and contribute positively to the sector. At our Mentor Breakfast event in 2015, members expressed an appetite for better mechanisms for mentorship of female researchers, and a need for this to be beyond an individual's team or organisation. In partnership with leadership consultants Serendis this year we are introducing a 6-month, structured, cross-organisational Mentoring Program targeted to women aspiring for leadership positions in the sector. Bianca from Serendis writes more below and you can find all the details on our [website](#). Although this year we are starting small, we're confident this will become a flagship program for women in health and medical research careers in Australia.

We hope you also enjoy a new segment – Health Researcher Career Profile – which replaces Journal Club as we hope to showcase more of the diverse outputs of health and medical research.

Happy reading.

Melina and the FW team

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## What happened this month

- Worthy medical scientist Professor Alan Mackay-Sim was named this years [Australian of the Year](#).
- However, women remained [significantly under-represented](#) in the nominations for Australia Day honours, particularly in the fields of science, technology and research.
- A recently released [position statement](#) from the AMA called for targets to increase the proportion of women in health leadership positions.
- QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute launched a fantastic [financial assistance policy](#) for their working mothers.
- Professionals Scientists Australia have developed this informative (and free!) webinar

on [writing successful NHMRC grant applications](#).

- The government announced [\\$3.9 million of funding](#) to inspire girls to study and pursue careers in science.
- Applications are still open for [Citizen Science Grants](#) to support community participation in scientific research projects, closing 17th February.
- Our own Melina Georgousakis spoke with Science Meets Business about how she [founded Franklin Women](#).
- We published a [new career blog](#) – our roving reporter Clare interviewed Dr Melanie Thomson on her transition from academia to med-tech start-up.



## Health Research Career Profile

*In an all-new feature for 2017, we meet some fascinating women in health, from academia and beyond!*

*First up is [Dr Becky Freeman](#), an NHMRC Early Career Research Fellow at the School of Public Health, University of Sydney. Her primary research interests include tobacco control and how online and social media influence public health. She is a British, Canadian and Australian citizen, so spends lots of money on passport renewals.*



***What is your training in the health or medical science field?*** Like most academics, I have my fair share of degrees! But I spent time working in both government and advocacy organisations before I pursued my PhD. During this time I often consulted and worked with many incredibly generous and strategic academics. I became really conscious that academics are in a unique position to positively influence public health policy reforms – which is essentially what I wanted to do! This was crucial training for me as it helped me figure out what sort of research I would most enjoy doing and what research is most useful in making change happen.

***How did you get to be a Senior Lecturer in the School of Public Health at the University of Sydney?*** I came to Australia to do my PhD and I just never left! I ended up here through a combination of hard work, immeasurable amounts of advice and support from family, friends and colleagues, and let's face it, a bit of luck. But my career is certainly not some sort of happy accident, I planned, chased my goals and continue to push my way through any door of opportunity that opens even a tiny crack.

***What is one of your favourite projects you are currently working on?*** That's like choosing a favourite child! Of course *all* my projects are my favourite, but I do a lot of research looking at how corporations, from the tobacco and junk food industries in

particular, are using social media to market harmful products. Nothing fires me up more than exposing how insidiously these corporations integrate their products into the lives of young people – public health needs to get a much better handle on how our digital lives impact on our overall health.

***What are some of the major ‘outputs’ from your work?*** I’m really proud of a paper I published years ago. It was the first public health research article that [\*analysed tobacco-related YouTube content\*](#). I remember other researchers looking at me oddly when I said I was analysing online videos as part of my PhD. I’m sure they were thinking, “aren’t they all about cats?” But this paper has now been cited 180 times and it set me up for my future career path.

***How do you think your work contributes to the field and/or the overall health of the community?*** Smoking rates in Australia are at a historic low and I’d like to think my research and advocacy efforts have played a role in helping make that happen. My social media research is part of a body of literature that has legitimised using social media for public health research and practice – and that is exceptionally satisfying.

***Who do you collaborate with and how did those work relationships come about?*** I think the key to successful collaborations is working with people who you like, respect and feel energised by. I have collaborations with people who I met through my workplace, at meetings, conferences and online – pretty much everywhere. I’ve also been fortunate to have senior colleagues volunteer me for projects that opened up a world of opportunities – this was crucial to exposing me to new partners.

***Do you have any side interests or passions that you are looking to develop?*** I really love presenting and talking about my research with media and non-academic audiences. I find it energising and believe that good research should never be locked in ivory towers and little-read journals. I think some people worry this sort of thing is too self-promoting, but I’ve learned to just shrug that off by focusing on the work instead.

***What food have you eaten too much of in your life?*** I love food! Eating it, cooking it, reading, writing and talking about it. My guilty pleasure is watching reality food TV, and I have certainly watched way TOO MUCH junk programming for it to be healthy!

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# Franklin Women Mentoring Program

**Franklin Women is thrilled to announce the launch of our Mentoring Program! Below [Bianca Havas](#), Senior Consultant and Program Director at [Serendis](#) and the facilitator of the Franklin Women Mentoring Program, shares why they jumped at the opportunity to be a part of it and how the program is designed for greatest impact.**



About 18 months ago I had the pleasure of meeting the dedicated and passionate women behind Franklin Women. My colleague and I were impressed to hear how a group of women in health and medical research had formed an organisation on their own steam to support other women in their field.

Shortly after, Serendis was invited to speak on the topic of mentoring at one of the fabulous Franklin Women breakfast events and at that breakfast event two things became clear to me:

1. The 100+ women who attended that event expressed a strong desire to experience the many benefits of mentoring but they weren't sure how to make it happen.

2. My colleague and I knew we wanted to work with this group of intelligent, enthusiastic women to help them develop their careers through a meaningful mentoring/leadership program, while simultaneously working with senior leaders of the sector to shift the culture and increase the number of women in leadership roles.

So with the input of the dedicated Franklin Women team, we began brainstorming a program specifically for women in the field of medical and health research.

It is with great pride that today we announce the launch next month of the Franklin Women Mentoring Program. My colleagues and I at Serendis are delighted to be facilitating the first cross-organisational mentoring program for the health and medical research sector.

This 6-month structured mentoring and leadership program facilitates formal mentee–mentor relationships between female researchers and senior professionals (male and female) in the health and medical research field to address the under-representation of women in leadership positions.

The aim of the program is to support the career development of women who already have a significant investment in their career and are looking to progress their career. Some of the benefits mentees will gain are developing leadership skills and strategic relationships, learning to promote themselves effectively and strengthening their resilience. A second aim of the program is to engage senior leaders in the importance of gender-balanced leadership and the role they play in achieving this.

I look forward to meeting and working with the first group of mentees and mentors from across the sector when we formally kick-off the program in a few months.

***Bianca's*** passion is to affect positive change at an individual and organisational level. She has also spent 10 years as an environmental advocacy campaigner for international organisations. Prior to that she graduated from a Communications degree at UTS and spent 2 years working on Hollywood films.

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## A crash course in SciCom

*At Franklin Women we love learning all about good science communication, and this month ***Top 5 Under 40 Scientist*** Gail Alvares shares her experience of a 2-week media residency with Radio National.*



At some point in my PhD I must have become aware that it is important to disseminate your work to the general public. My university hadn't offered any training in this, but the little understanding of how important such communication would be in my future research career was likely gleaned from reading science blogs ([JFLScience](#) had just started) or from the occasional news crew in the research institute where I trained. But I quickly learned how little I actually knew when I went behind the scenes to where science stories are created.

In 2016 I was fortunate enough to be chosen as one of the Top 5 Under 40 (but really, it turned out to be 6) scientists in Australia to undertake a 2-week media residency with Radio National in collaboration with UNSW. I applied because I knew how passionate I was about my science – I am an autism researcher working at the Telethon Kids Institute in Perth – but had very limited experience in disseminating my work wider than a few local news stories and some writing for *The Conversation*. So I was absolutely stoked to be a part of the competitive program.

The media residency was an incredibly intense 2 weeks, with morning to evening workshops on all things radio, digital content, social media and TV. In between learning how science content is created, us scientists were put quickly to work to create our own content with our mentors. Radio National and ABC Science Online have dedicated science teams throughout Australia devoted to finding the newest, freshest science content that highlights Australian scientists. Each week, they go through the various journal press releases to find stories, or occasionally are pitched stories about some new work. Once a story is selected, they will source scientists to comment or for fact-checking, and then curate a narrative around the actual science. One of the most important lessons I learned is that these

talented teams are incredibly busy but in need of content constantly, so are always willing to have interesting stories pitched to them by scientists themselves.

At the end of my residency, I had a segment for Radio National, had done live interviews and answered science queries on-air, written an online piece and created a video, agreed to takeover the ABC's Snapchat account for a day during National Science Week, and met five other amazing scientists in the process. Amongst all the workshops and creating content, I learned how scientific content is produced to make a story that is compelling to listen to and engages an audience whom you may not have thought would be interested in your work.

The most thoughtful and memorable emails I got afterwards were from families who had children with autism who were happy to hear that this research was being done and asking if they could help in any way. The generosity and altruism from the families I work with is a big part of what keeps me passionate about my research. Being able to communicate my research confidently is not just important for getting more exposure for the research I do, but has now become a new way that I am able to give something back to these families.

***Gail Alvares*** is a postdoctoral research fellow at the Telethon Kids Institute, University of Western Australia. She juggles research with trying to travel widely and hopes one day to live in one place long enough to have a dog.

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## We are loving right now...

**Summer!!** It's been a stinking hot January, but we're still loving the sunshine and long summer days. It's not over yet, so here are some of our favourite summery tricks and treats...

- Have you heard of [My UV Patch](#)? Such a clever way to track your UV exposure while playing out in the sun this summer.
  - The best way to cool down? Why with some [Over the Moo](#) of course!
  - Or try out some of these delicious [iced tea recipes](#) in this handy [tea pitcher](#) with removable infuser.
  - If your New Year resolution was to read more books, check out this list of what 40 TED speakers recommend you should be [reading this summer](#).
  - Finally, we hope you're enjoying summer pool time as much as [these guys](#), aww!
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We want to include your contributions in our newsletter. If you are doing something, or know about something, that you think other women in our field would be interested in, drop us a [line](#). We are all about sharing, promoting and collaborating between women in our field. Don't be shy, it might bring about a great opportunity! Want to receive our newsletters directly to your in-box? [Subscribe here](#).