President's Report

AGM of the Australasian Speech Science and Technology Association,
1st October 2026 12.45pm AEDT

I hope you have all had a productive and fulfilling 2026. To all members, congratulations on your many achievements over the past year, including funding successes, publications, presentations, career progression, research and teaching impact, and personal goals kicked. We are very pleased celebrate your accomplishments as a member of our ASSTA community.

I'd like to especially acknowledge those of you in teaching roles, who are so often the unsung heroes of our community. Teaching in higher education has never been simple, and recent years have brought both new opportunities but considerable new challenges. Whether you are redesigning assessments, experimenting with new technologies, supporting increasingly diverse student cohorts, or finding creative ways to engage learners, your work has a profound and lasting impact. Your creativity, adaptability, and commitment to student learning helps to shape the future of education in our field. Navigating the complexities of contemporary higher education requires resilience, patience, and no small measure of courage. While much of this work happens behind the scenes and often goes unrecognised, it is deeply valued. Thank you for the energy, care, and expertise you bring to your teaching, and for the difference you make in the lives of your students every day.

Congratulations to our student members who have completed higher degrees this year. Your achievements reflect your dedication and strengthen our research community. We also celebrate the supervisors who have supported, guided, and championed you throughout your candidature. The path to academic success is never without challenges. Seeking support from peers, supervisors and mentors is a critical part of the process. ASSTA endeavours to help provide such support through various initiatives including our grants programs, SST conference, and ECR/PG network.

This year has been a very eventful year for ASSTA. Our impact as a society is in the spotlight as the host of the highly successful Interspeech conference at the International Convention Centre (ICC) Sydney 28th September to 1st October. Interspeech is the premiere speech communication science and technology conference in the world, and we are pleased to announce that we have attracted more than 2100 delegates to the event. ASSTA executive members Michael Proctor and I have been part of the team of General Co-chairs (including Beena Ahmed and ASSTA member Vidhya Sethu) who have worked incredibly hard over the past 5 years to bring Interspeech to Australia. Thanks also to ASSTA members Josh Penney, Tuende Szalay, Debbie Loakes, Olga Maxwell, Rosey Billington, Gerry Docherty, Janet Fletcher, David Grayden, Catherine Watson and Jesin James for their contribution to the organising committee. The conference would not have been possible without the dedication, generosity, and support of the ASSTA community. Whether you have contributed as an organiser, reviewer, volunteer, sponsor, presenter, or attendee, thank you for helping to make this event a reality. We are confident that the proceeds from Interspeech 2026 will help us fund ASSTA initiatives into the future.

Our conference theme, **Speaking Together**, was chosen to reflect both Sydney and our broader Australasian region, celebrating the rich diversity of languages, cultures, and communities that shape who we are. It also speaks to the breadth and vibrancy of research across speech science and technology, highlighting the many ways our field brings people, ideas, and innovations together. Interspeech 2026 represents a significant milestone for ASSTA and an extraordinary opportunity to showcase our region on the world stage. 35 ASSTA members' papers are presented at the conference – an excellent representation given the challenges of having a paper accepted at Interspeech. 3446

papers were submitted at the first deadline and 3189 at the paper update deadline – an increase of 752 papers compared to Interspeech 2025. After desk rejections and withdrawn papers were removed, 3028 papers were reviewed with 1360 papers accepted. The overall acceptance rate was 45%. In addition, Michael Proctor and Kirsty MacDougall led inspiring tutorials. As SST this year is incorporated into Interspeech, we have created an ASSTA within Interspeech timetable in support of ASSTA members at the conference. 2026 is also our Speech Science and Technology (SST) conference series' 40th birthday and a dedicated afternoon tea has been arranged at Interspeech to celebrate. The inaugural SST was held in Canberra in 1986. I was a n early career researcher at that conference and felt very supported by the community that was to become ASSTA (which was incorporated in 1988).

As part of ASSTA's commitment to advancing speech science and technology across Australasia and supporting the professional development of our members, we offer a suite of grants and support programs. These initiatives are designed to help members at different stages of their careers and to foster engagement, collaboration, and innovation within our community. This year, to support ASSTA student members present their work at Interspeech, a bespoke **New Researcher Awards Scheme: Interspeech** was created. The award consists of free registration and tickets to all relevant social events including the conference banquet. Eleven eligible students applied for the award and, although only six awards were given, the remaining five applicants were awarded Special Initiative Volunteer places enabling them access to the same benefits as those who received the New Researcher Award. Independent reviewers were unanimous that all eleven applicants were of such a high calibre that all should be supported. The awardees are: Timothy Shea and Zixia Fan (Maquarie University), Shubo Li and Thomas Powell-Davies (ANU), Zixi Jing, Junchen Liu, Epri Pratiwi, Himashi Rathnayake and Pasindu Udawatta (University of Auckland), Yang Xiao (University of Melbourne), Hanyu Meng (UNSW). Well done and congratulations to all. These students will be eligible for our ASSTA Best Science Communication Award which will be announced at the Interspeech Closing event.

In SST years we offer the **New Researcher Award** presented to the best ECR/student paper submitted to SST with a cash prize of $750 and a conference dinner ticket. This award will next be available in 2028. We continue to offer **Conference Travel Awards** to support attendance at selected international conferences. Awardees this year are Hanyu Meng for ICASSP 2026 in Barcelona and Joy Mills for Speech Prosody 2026 in Philadelphia. Three major conferences have been chosen for funding: ICASSP, INTERSPEECH and ICPhS with funding for other conferences also considered, with preference for full paper review, but subject to funding being available and dependent on the quality of the submission. An **ASSTA Research Event Awards** of $5,000 supported Jesin James to run the Pacific Voices 2026: Speech Science and Technology for Languages of the Pacific Ocean event at Interspeech 2026 on the Indigenous Voices Day and bring key community members to the event. An **ASSTA Special Initiative Award to** Tuende Szalay supported the Young Female Researchers in Speech Workshop held at UNSW on Saturday 26th September. ASSTA acknowledges that carers face challenges juggling research and care responsibilities. The **Carer Support Scheme** was initiated to help members with caring responsibilities participate in national and international conferences. We encourage members to make use of these various awards and schemes. If you have colleagues or students who would benefit from being part of our community, please encourage them to join ASSTA and take advantage of the many opportunities and support programs available.

Our ECR/PG Network, led by Tuende Szalay over the past two years has been very active, with monthly meetings providing valuable opportunities for connection, mentorship, and support for early career and student members. This is a fantastic initiative that helps foster a sense of community and belonging, and I encourage eligible members to get involved. Not everyone works within a large research group or has a network of colleagues within their institutions. For many members, the ECR/PG Network offers an important opportunity to connect with peers who share similar

experiences, challenges, and aspirations. Whether you're looking for professional advice, opportunities to broaden your network, or simply a chance to engage with others in the field, the network provides a welcoming and supportive environment. Building connections early in your career can make a real difference and the ECR/PG Network is helping to ensure that no one feels isolated in their research journey. Thank you Tuende for your dedication to oour ECRs and students. A new ECR/PG rep will be announced at the AGM.

It's now time to start planning for SST2028. SST conferences are renowned for their friendly and inclusive atmosphere, offering members a supportive space to present their research, exchange ideas, and receive valuable feedback. Whether you are presenting for the first time or sharing the latest results from an established research program, SST provides opportunities to learn from one another, build new collaborations, and strengthen the connections that make our community so vibrant. For students and early-career researchers in particular, SST can be an excellent platform for developing presentation skills, showcasing new work, and becoming more connected to the speech science community. Just as importantly, SST is where many mentoring relationships and friendships begin. Please get in touch with any of the Executive or the secretary secretary@assta.org if you'd like to host SST2028.

Thank you Jesin James for editing the ASSTA Newsletter. It is wonderful to read about the accomplishments of ASSTA members. Thank you to Justine Hui who has taken on the role of Web Officer and thanks to Debbie Loakes for managing ASSTA's social media presence on LinkedIn (follow the ASSTA page). Please send through details of your accepted papers, events, presentations, lab news so we can celebrate ASSTA widely. We also encourage you to send any announcements for our community via the secretary's mailbox and we particularly encourage notices for presentations or seminars that would be of interest to ASSTA members.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the ASSTA Executive (Sasha Calhoun, Debbie Loakes, Olga Maxwell, Michael Proctor and Tuende Szalay for their hard work and dedication to the ASSTA community, and to you for your continued support of ASSTA. It has been my honour and privilege to represent you as President over the past 8 years and secretary for the 4 years prior. I am incredibly grateful for your kindness and support.

May you and your families stay happy and well.



Felicity Cox

ASSTA President