



Geological Society of Australia

MEDIA RELEASE
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TWO South Australian geologists - one advancing new research at university, the other semi-retired after a career that began after he walked out of his high school science class - will tonight receive prestigious Geological Society of Australia awards for outstanding research and leadership.

Emeritus Professor John Cann, 70, and post-doctoral researcher Ben Wade, 27, will be awarded the Bruce Webb and Walter Howchin medals, respectively, at the society's annual dinner at the Historian Hotel, Coromandel PI, Adelaide (in case news grps/photographers want to attend).

Professor Cann, whose research at the Univeristy of South Australia includes studying sea level change using marine animals, called forams, as ancient biomarkers of climate change, said he was honoured to receive the award named in memory of after Bruce Webb, geologist and former chancellor of the University of Adelaide.

Doctor Ben Wade is undertaking research at the University of Adelaide. Ben's research looks at how the Australian continent was formed over "deep time". His award is named after Professor Walter Howchin, a geologist and naturalist who migrated to South Australia to lecture in mineralogy and palaeontology. Prof. Howchin died in 1937.

"I got into science because of an awful class I attended in school," Professor Cann said, having been born in the same year Walter Howchin died. "I decided I could do better, so I became a secondary school teacher of science, and then university lecturer."

The internationally recognized scientist has just returned with students from a field study of Australia's coastline, looking at the effects of natural climate change on the iconic Coorong region of South Australia.

He acknowledged geology in Australia was currently in a sustained boom that has seen a big rise in student enrolments, particularly in mineral-rich States such as South Australia and WA.

"In the US and Europe, geology departments have crumbled and closed down," he said. "In Australia, more students now want to take degrees, particularly in geology and mining engineering."

Professor Cann has four children, his eldest son completing a PhD on industrial psychology at Cambridge University in the UK. He enjoys symphony orchestra concerts and walking his dogs. He also has Parkinson's disease.

The Bruce Webb Medal acknowledges distinguished leadership in individuals who have advanced the earth sciences, and the Walter Howchin Medal distinguished published research by individuals under 35.

Further information about the awards and opportunities to speak with the award winners are available through Society division chair and previous Howchin Medal winner Nick Direen at ndireen@frogtech.com.au or 0413030612.

The GSA is a member based organisation that strives to promote, advance and support Earth Sciences in Australia. The Society aims to create an awareness of the essential part that Earth sciences play in the management of our environment and natural resources for the benefit of all Australians. Email: info@gsa.org.au