The AJLD Eminent Researcher and AJLD Early Career Researcher Awards are funded and were presented by Taylor and Francis Group, publishers of the LDA Journal, the *Australian Journal of Learning Difficulties*. They are designed to acknowledge significant contributions to research and to encourage submissions of high quality research papers.

The LDA Mona Tobias and LDA Tertiary Student Awards are designed to recognise outstanding work in the field of learning difficulties. These Awards are open to both members and non-members of LDA. Click here for further information about these awards.

**AJLD EMINENT RESEARCHER AWARD**

The 2015 recipient of the AJLD Eminent Researcher Award is Emeritus Professor Max Coltheart AM, of Cognitive Science at Macquarie University, the ARC Centre of Excellence for Cognition and its Disorders at Macquarie University, and Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science and a corresponding Fellow of the British Academy. Max is pictured here with Sara Blatchford, Regional Director of the Taylor and Francis Group, promoter of the award.

The magnitude of Professor Coltheart’s distinguished research contributions and career highlights in relation to reading is substantial. In the late 1970s, after working primarily in visual perception, Max became interested in the skilled reading process. He discovered and reported on a number of basic benchmark effects in reading, such as neighbourhood and homophone effects, that are still widely relied on today. This work stimulated his theory development, resulting in his hugely influential dual route model of reading. He has since gone much further with this model by making it a fully-fledged computational model: the DRC model.

In the 1980s, Max began to work on disorders of reading caused by brain damage, discovering fascinating cases with highly specific patterns of impairment, and from these cases, Max gleaned that there was an important interplay between theory and clinical practice: cases could inform models of reading, but models of reading could also inform the assessment and treatment of cases. Max then began to apply these ideas to developmental disorders of reading. He applied the dual route model to developmental reading problems and showed how different patterns of deficit could be identified exactly as predicted by the model. He has since worked with a range of collaborators on applying these ideas to typical reading development and to understanding causal pathways to reading difficulties.


**2015 AJLD Early Career Award**

The 2015 recipient of the AJLD Early Career Researcher Award is Dr Tanya Serry, pictured here with Sara Blatchford, Regional Director of the Taylor and Francis Group.
Francis Group, promoter of the award. Tanya is of Discipline Speech Pathology La Trobe University and Honorary fellow (Murdoch Children's Research Institute), College of Science, Allied Health and Engineering School of Health Living with Disability Research Centre.

Tanya is a qualified speech pathologist and has worked in various clinical roles with both adults and children. In her first academic role, in 1995, she worked at The Bionic Ear Institute as a researcher and lecturer (Master of Audiology - University of Melbourne), and in 2000 moved into a part-time academic and clinical supervision role at La Trobe University. Tanya completed her PhD in 2010, and since then has continued her academic work, research and administrative roles for the Discipline of Speech Pathology, as well as engaging in broader university activities and committees. Her main areas of teaching are in paediatric speech, language and literacy, and is team leader of curriculum development in these areas.

Tanya is a very active researcher and member of a number of disciplinary and interdisciplinary research teams both within and external to La Trobe University. The central theme of her research is policy and practices in the Australian context for students who struggle with reading and spelling at all levels. Tanya has made a striking contribution to research as evidenced by her 2015 articles Children with reading problems: Missed opportunities to make a difference, co-authored with Frank Oberklaid and published Australian Journal of Education, 59 (1), and What's in a word? Challenges facing the term developmental dyslexia in an Australian context co-authored with Dr Lorraine Hammond, to be published in the 5 Vol 20 Number 2 of the Australian Journal Learning Difficulties, and more.

**2015 AJLD Early Career Highly Commended Award**

Dr Anne Bellert, of Southern Cross University Faculty of Education and Social Work, received the special 2015 AJLD acclamation of ‘highly commended’ for her paper Effective Re-teaching, AJLD Vol 20 No.2. This review focuses on re-teaching within a formative cycle of instruction in regular classroom settings.

Anne’s main lecturing and research interests are learning difficulties, effective teaching for literacy and numeracy, neuroscience and education. Anne was LDA’s 2008 Student Award Winner with her paper Narrowing the gap: A report on the QuickSmart mathematics intervention, published in the Australian Journal of Learning Difficulties Vol 14 No.2. This article focuses on the cognitive factors that impact on students in the middle school years experiencing learning difficulties in basic mathematics.

**2015 LDA Mona Tobias Award**

The 2015 recipient of the LDA Mona Tobias Award is Emeritus Professor Brian Byrne, of the University of New University New England, and a Chief Investigator in the ARC Centre of Excellence in Cognition and its Disorders and in the NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence in Twin Research. Brian is pictured here with Lorraine Hammond, President of LDA, who presented the Award.

Brian Byrne has made significant contributions to research on reading development, the acquisition of reading, the education of students with learning difficulties, and to leadership in research translation and engagement with the community. He has conducted a large number of innovative studies on children’s acquisition of the alphabetic principle – the insight that spoken words can be broken up into component sounds and that these can be linked with letters – demonstrating that this acquisition does not come naturally, and that children need to be explicitly made aware of it, with direct implications for the teaching of reading and reading interventions. His group, including Ruth Fielding-Barnsley and Hilary Pollock, developed an instructional package, “Sound Foundations,” a program for the training of
phonemic awareness for use with preschool and kindergarten children. The package, evaluated in field trials in NSW schools, proved valuable in supporting early reading growth, with effects extending out over several years of schooling and direct implications for the teaching of reading and reading interventions.

Brian has published widely both in Australia and overseas. He is particularly well known for his involvement in the large scale international twin study research, disentangling genetic from environmental factors in learning to read, showing that a child’s genetic inheritance is the dominant factor influencing progress in the acquisition of literacy. He is currently exploring genetic and environmental influences on the NAPLAN tests across Australia. From this new work, there is huge potential for the development of carefully-designed curricula (including intervention and support strategies) to assist children to realise their literacy potential.

2015 LDA Tertiary Student Award

Dr Danielle Colenbrander is the 2015 LDA Tertiary Student Award winner with her excellent paper entitled “Individual differences in the vocabulary skills of children with poor comprehension”. This paper was part of Danielle’s doctoral studies undertaken at the Department of Cognitive Science, Macquarie University. Danielle has written a feature for the next LDA Bulletin summarising some of her key findings.

Danielle’s primary research interests are educational psychology, cognitive psychology, and educational assessment. In July 2014 she presented “How do oral vocabulary skills affect reading comprehension?” at a seminar discussing how poor comprehenders are children whose reading comprehension skills are below the expected level for their age, despite age-appropriate word and text reading abilities. In April 2015 she was a keynote speaker at the ARC Centre of Excellence in Cognition and its Disorders conference, featuring leading researchers from around the world discussing reading and spelling development, disorders, and remediation for both practice and research. Her presentation was titled When reading isn’t comprehension: What can go wrong and what can we do about it?

Danielle co-authored Assessment of lexical and non-lexical spelling in students in Grades 1–7, with Saskia Kohnen, Danielle Colenbrander, Trudy Krajenbrink, Lyndsey Nickels, published in the 2015 Vol19 No.1 issue of the Australian Journal of Learning Difficulties. The intent of this study was to develop standardised tests that assess and measure lexical and non-lexical spelling skills separately, and to assess the relative prevalence of spelling difficulties that only affect one skill selectively, finding that throughout Grades 1–7 children were as likely to have selective difficulties as they were to have mixed difficulties.