

## ABNA 2020 Annual General Meeting

### 2020/2021 ABNA Committee

**PRESIDENT:** Anusha Hettiaratchi

**VICE PRESIDENT:** Cassandra Griffin

**TREASURERS:** Valerie Jakrot, Catherine Kennedy & Helen Tsimiklis

**SECRETARY:** Ussha Pillai

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS:**

Nina D'Vaz, Samantha Higgins, Daniel Kilmartin, Wayne Ng, Georget Reaiche-Miller, Leanne Wallace, Li Zhou.

As a sign of the times, the ABNA 2020 Annual General Meeting (AGM) looked a little different to years passed. The AGM was held virtually on 23 October to review the past 12 months of ABNA activity, with the presidents report, delivered by ABNA president Anusha Hettiaratchi, covering key strategic initiatives such as the ABNA/ISBER affiliate agreement, website redesign and revision of the rules of the association.

The Financial and Membership reports were delivered by Valerie Jakrot and Cassandra Griffin respectively. The account balance for October 2020 remains consistent with previous years and is inclusive of the initial 2020/21 conference deposit. For those wishing to view these figures in detail – a copy of the financial report, along with the official minutes, will be available for ABNA financial members on the new ABNA website – due for launch next month. The website sub-committee are looking forward to proceeding to phase 2 of the website re-development project and provided sneak peak of the completed phase 1 platform.

Thanks were given to the existing committee members including outgoing members Pamela Saunders, vice president Oct 2019 - Mar 2020, and Samantha Cauberg – with special thanks given to Secretary Leanne Wallace who has resigned the role of secretary but will remain a committee member for 2021. Two new faces will join the committee for 2021, Samantha Higgins and Daniel Kilmartin – both are warmly welcomed. In 2021 the role of Secretary will be filled by Ussha Pillai, while Helen Tsimiklis will join Catherine Kennedy and Valerie Jakrot as treasurer to ensure continuity within the role. All other office bearer positions will remain for 2021 and we look forward to working with the new committee in the coming 12 months.

A summary of 2020 ISBER activities was provided by ISBER President Dan Catchpoole who also introduced a number of opportunities for professional development as well as the release of the ISBER Best Practices 4th edition. As a topical highlight, Dan discussed the BBMRI/ISBER biobank COVID collaboration, established to ensure timely provision of COVID samples for research during the ongoing pandemic. Dan's overview was supported by input from Helen Morrin about her work on the ISBER Science Policy Committee and we look forward to bringing you a more detailed summary of their work with ISBER in a special edition of Bio-Babble in early 2021.

It is uncertain at this time as to whether the 2021 conference will proceed as a face-to-face or semi-virtual event, however we will endeavour to keep all members up to date through regular communications, Bio-Babble and our new website. As was aptly reminded by ISBER president Dan Catchpole, while COVID has provided a number of challenges for the biobanking community – it also provides opportunities for us to engage in new and productive ways with our research community. Now more than ever, it's imperative that the biobanking community continues to strive for excellence and to work in a consciously collaborative manner to ensure essential research projects have access to the necessary biospecimens.

On behalf of the committee, we look forward to working alongside you in 2021.

# South Australian Biobanking Summit - Moving Towards Harmonisation

Georget Reaiche

On Thursday October 22nd the University of Adelaide Biobank hosted the first Biobanking Summit in South Australia. This event was organised in response to the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS) scoping study into biobanking. The purpose of this one day event, officially opened by the Chief Scientist of South Australia, Professor Caroline McMillen, was to bring all biobanks and collection facilities in South Australia together with a view to work towards a state-wide harmonised approach to biobanking.

For the first part of the day we heard from speakers from different areas of biobanking. Professor Jennifer Byrne, Director of Biobanking, NSW Health Pathology provided an update on NCRIS scoping study and NSW approach to state-wide biobanking. This was followed by Dr Chris Gorman, providing an insight on BioSpecs: A Biobanking Service at Telethon Kids Institute. Dr Sam Costello Co-Founder of the BiomeBank gave a fascinating overview of the work and the services they provide with the lifesaving procedure of Faecal Matter Transfers for the treatment of Clostridium Difficile infections. Dr Megan Penno provided an update on the National Environmental Determinants of Islet Autoimmunity (ENDIA) study and Dr Lauren Meyer co-founder of Otlet gave an insightful presentation on how simple and convenient a database can be and still be able achieve amazing worldwide collaborations. Associate Professor David Ross, Deputy Director of SACRB provided an overview of the South Australian Cancer Research Biobank and Dr Georget Reaiche-Miller delivered the final presentation discussing the overview of biobanking at the University of Adelaide, biobanking in South Australia and the Canadian biobanking model as a harmonised approach.



*Angus Netting, Director, The University of Adelaide Biobank, welcomes delegates to the South Australian Biobanking Summit*



*Prof Caroline McMillen, Chief Scientist for South Australia, officially opens the Biobanking Summit*

The second part of the day was a round-table facilitated discussion chaired by the Director of the Adelaide Biobank, Angus Netting on "Biobanking and future directions in South Australia". The topics covered by the attendees were around infrastructure, funding and sustainability, governance, ethics and consent, data management and quality assurance. The purpose of this exercise was to hear from biobankers themselves on what they thought the pressing issues in a state-wide approach would be and how a centralised or harmonised model would benefit the state of South Australia. The majority of the discussion was around funding as most of the biobanks and collections facilities identified in South Australia (upwards of 35 entities) rely on soft funding. The importance of having a harmonised biobanking approach that is suitable for different sectors also played a key role in the discussions, highlighting the need for biobanking basic research material (animal, plant and soil) as well as human and disease specific samples. The attendees also discussed in depth the benefit of having both:

- 1) a single bioinformatics platform as a starting point where samples can be shared across different areas of research
- 2) a standardised protocol for ethics and consent that is also suitable for indigenous collections.





*Interstate speaker Prof Jennifer Byrne, Director of Biobanking, NSW Health Pathology*



*Interstate speaker Dr Chris Gorman, Telethon Kids Institute, WA*



*Dr Georget Reaiche-Miller, Manager, The University of Adelaide Biobank*

The first South Australian Biobanking Summit was a successful event, and has moved the state one step closer to a more harmonised state-wide approach to biobanking. As a result, The University of Adelaide Biobank will begin working closely with state government towards establishing a Biobanking Steering Committee that will work to improve the quality of research through the introduction of harmonised best practices in biobanking.



## Victorian Cancer Biobank - Key Achievements for FY2019-2020

Samantha Higgins

The Victorian Cancer Biobank (VCB) consortium provides a coordinated program that collects, manages and distributes tissue samples to support cancer research in Victoria, Australia and throughout the world. Click [HERE](#) to read the VCB's recently published Key Achievements for FY2019-2020, and to view case studies on how VCB continues to support researchers to improve cancer outcomes.



## Biobanking for Western Australia - one step closer

Jennie Hui, Gary Geelhoed, Aron Chakera

WA is one step closer to a harmonised biobanking system which will enable researchers to translate discoveries into improved disease detection, diagnosis and treatment through access to a comprehensive collection of biospecimens and associated data.

Within WA, there are a number of well-established high-quality population-based biobanks as well as numerous disease-based biobanks. Population-based biobanks include the Busselton Health Study, established in 1966 and one of the longest running epidemiological health studies in the world, with well-defined aims, protocols and governance structures. Similarly, the Raine Study, established in 1989, is one of the largest prospective cohorts of pregnancy, childhood, adolescence and adulthood in the world. Over the last decade, the database and biospecimens for these studies have been used by researchers worldwide. The data obtained have been translated into health benefits not only within Australia, but also globally. Existing data and biological specimens collected from these studies cannot realistically be replaced. To collect and store similar data would cost tens of millions of dollars and decades of effort. It is therefore important to preserve, as well as learn from, these valuable local resources.

Apart from these larger established biobanks, there are hundreds of other biobanks which vary in size and scope, with an array of operating models and governance structures in WA. These biobanks vary in complexity from a single freezer managed by a sole investigator to established, networked biobanks for sample collection, processing, storage and distribution.

In 2018/19, Professor Gary Geelhoed, Executive Director of the WA Health Translation Network, commissioned a scoping study for a standardised biobanking approach in WA. This recognised that WA is disadvantaged by the lack of a cohesive biobanking system with hundreds of biobanks operating independently, often with different purposes and protocols.

A steering committee, with representation from all major Universities, Hospitals and institutes was formed in 2019/20. The main aims of the committee are to define key strategic objectives relating to governance, access, ethics, quality assurance, data management, infrastructure and funding. Outcomes achieved to date include:

- 1) making OpenSpecimen the default software for biobanking in WA.
- 2) creating a WA state-wide biobank directory with templates for ethics and governance (under construction).

The WA state-wide biobank directory can be found [HERE](#).

The committee continues to meet regularly to encompass the requirements of diverse biobanks and to advance the project in 2020/21.



*Professor Gary Geelhoed  
Executive Director of the WA Health Translation Network*



Western Australian Health Translation Network



## Qualification in Biorepository Science (QBRs) for Biobankers



**Qualification requirements have been updated!**  
For biobanking professionals

**3 NEW ROUTES AVAILABLE FOR APPLICATION NOW.**

Wondering if you can apply?  
Visit [isber.org/qualification](http://isber.org/qualification) for details!

QUALIFICATION in BIOREPOSITORY SCIENCE  
a partnership between ISBER and ASCP

ISBER and ASCP BOC are pleased to announce the Qualification in Biorepository Science (QBRs) for biobankers. Upon meeting specific educational and experience requirements for the qualification, candidates will be eligible to complete an online examination and, if successful, gain recognition for their skills and competencies as biobankers.

This new qualification will further advance the field of biorepository science! Biobanks are vital to medical research and precision medicine and require qualified professionals to obtain high quality results that will be useful in advancing biomedicine.

New eligibility routes have recently been added! For more details, please visit [www.isber.org/qualification](http://www.isber.org/qualification)

## Call for Abstracts & Workshop Proposals for the ISBER 2021 Annual Meeting



ISBER is pleased to announce that abstract and workshop proposal submissions for the 2021 Annual Meeting are open! The theme of the meeting is "Connect and Collaborate through Biobanking: Powering Innovation and Discovery". We would encourage you to submit your abstracts and workshop proposals that fit within this theme.

For more details, please visit [www.isber.org/ISBER2021AnnualMeeting](http://www.isber.org/ISBER2021AnnualMeeting)

Submission Deadline: November 23, 2020 at 11:59PM North America Eastern Time

If you have any suggestions for a short article for Bio-Babble,  
please contact : [abna.biobabble@gmail.com](mailto:abna.biobabble@gmail.com)

Content deadline for November 2020 edition: 20.11.20