



ABNA EXCHANGE

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE AUSTRALASIAN BIOSPECIMEN NETWORK ASSOCIATION

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Annual Conference

Abstracts

Abstract submissions are still open – **but only until midnight September 8**. Submissions are done directly through the Currinda portal. You can view abstract submission guidelines and categories [HERE](#).

ABNA Emerging Biobanking Leader Scholarship

We would like to congratulate this year's winners!

ASHLEY RUDGE and HELEN WILLIAMS

We look forward to seeing their work at the conference!

Conference 2025 Gala Dinner

This year the conference gala dinner has the theme of The Roaring 20's!

Step back in time (in keeping with Biobanking Evolving Through Time) and join us in your best 1920's inspired attire.

Get creative and think flapper flair, dapper suits and let's make it a night Gatsby would envy!

"See you there, Old Sport"



55 days to go and counting!

And just like that, we're only two months away from the ABNA 2025 Annual Conference: Biobanking Evolving Through Time. Be sure to register, submit your abstracts, and take a look at the draft program now 'streaming' online.

ABNA is now calling for expressions of interest to join the ABNA Management Committee. The Management Committee is responsible for the business and affairs of ABNA and is comprised of Ordinary Members and Office Bearer positions. There are multiple sub committees including Conference Organising, Seminar Series and Newsletter subcommittee that provide the opportunity to help shape the direction of our organisation while connecting with colleagues across the biobanking community. Watch for more details in your member mailouts.

In this edition, Dr Elna Conradie is in the 5 Minutes with a Biobanker spotlight, sharing her journey and reflections on the world of biobanking. You'll also find our featured article on Australasian Seed Science, which highlights the significance of seed banking and offers a glimpse into their upcoming conferences. To help with your ABNA conference planning, don't miss the [Newcastle Conference Corner blog](#), giving insider hotel information and insider tips on things to see and do in Newcastle.

And finally, in celebration of National Science Week, we're thrilled to share a [short story](#) with our very own past president, Cassandra Griffin. The video not only features Cassandra but, for those of you who have been reading the blog, keep your eyes peeled for a surprise guest appearance too.

We hope you enjoy this edition and we are counting down the days until we come together in Newcastle for what promises to be an outstanding conference.

Georget

5 Minutes with a Biobanker

We approach a different professional in the biobanking arena with the same five questions each month.



This month Dr Elne Conradie answers our questions.

Dr Conradie is the Quality Assurance and Biobank Manager at Centre for Human Metabolomics, NWU, also known as the National Metabolomics Platform, in South Africa.

Dr Conradie is ISBERs Director-At-Large for the Europe, Middle East and Africa region.

THE QUICK QUESTIONS

Are you left or right handed?

Right

... but not quite: Technically, I'm right-handed. But! There's a bit of a plot twist — I used to be fully ambidextrous as a child. Then came the well-meaning adults (you know, parents and teachers), who insisted I "pick a side" for the sake of handwriting consistency. Everyone around me wrote with their right hand, so that's the team I joined. But to this day, my left hand still sneaks into the action when it comes to sports, opening jars, or brushing my teeth. So ... ambidextrous at heart, right-handed by peer pressure!

Would you rather play it safe or risk it all?

Risk it all

Honestly? It depends. I'm a planner — I like to zoom out and look a few steps ahead. So if the long-term payoff looks worth it, I'll absolutely take the risk (strategically, of course — no cliff jumping without a parachute!). But if the stakes are high and the reward is meh, I'll happily play it safe with a cup of coffee in hand. It's all about calculated boldness.

Should pineapple go on pizza?

Yes

Absolutely yes! Sweet, salty, cheesy chaos — and I'm here for it.

Do you prefer to type or hand-write meeting notes?

Handwritten

... but with a twist. See, if I wrote it by hand, then I can't really argue with myself later. It's right there in my own chicken scratch — case closed. Typed notes are great, but handwriting feels like leaving a paper trail my future self can trust (even if I need a decoder ring to read it).

Dark vs milk chocolate, which one would you chose?

Milk chocolate

I don't discriminate — chocolate is chocolate, and the more, the better! It's my ultimate Achilles' heel or Kryptonite. One square becomes five, and suddenly I'm negotiating with myself like, "Okay, just one more row..."

5 Minutes with a Biobanker ... continued

1. What was your first job in biobanking?

Well ... it wasn't exactly planned! I started out as an atmospheric chemist, then somehow found myself in a pharmaceutical compliance testing lab for six years. (Yes, science does take you places!) Eventually, I joined the CHM as a research officer end of 2018, and my very first task was to write a proposal for a biobank to submit to ethics.

Naturally, I asked my director, "What is a biobank, exactly?" His answer: "I don't know — that's why you're here. Figure it out". So I did. And the rest, as they say, is biobank history.

2. How long has your biobank been operating and what is your 'elevator pitch' for your biobank/job?

Our biobank was approved in 2019 — proudly the first rare disease-specific biobank on the African continent! As for my job... it's a bit of a mixed bag (more like a sampler platter of science!).

I juggle quality assurance in our diagnostic lab, biobanking, participant recruitment, collaboration-hunting, funding-chasing, and setting up a new centralized biobank at the university. On top of that, I'm helping to build a national medical biobank network for South Africa, while also championing biobank and rare disease awareness and education.

Basically? I connect dots, build bridges, and try to make science more human.

3. What is the craziest thing you have done to save a sample/s?

Nothing too wild in biobanking (yet!), but I do have a hair-raising story from my atmospheric chemistry days.

One of my PhD sampling stations was deep inside the Kruger National Park — in a remote science camp far from tourist routes, fenced in by a very non-reassuring 2m wire fence (no barbed wire, no electricity ... just a polite suggestion to the wildlife).

To get in, you had to drive down a barely-there gravel road, park as close to the gate as possible, and then — with your heart pounding — quietly hop out, unlock the gate, unwind the chain, and start offloading heavy equipment. I was using minivol samplers and had about 8 hefty cases plus a bonus case of pre-assembled filter heads (because who wants to assemble those with adrenaline coursing through their veins?).

The trick was to move fast but stay quiet, do your setup inside the camp, test, set timers ... and then repeat the whole heart-pounding routine in reverse to get out.

On one visit, just — and I mean just — after I slammed the back door shut on my way out, a massive buffalo bull stepped out of the bush ... less than two metres from where I had been standing seconds earlier.

Moral of the story? Science is wild. Sometimes literally.



4. What has been your favourite moment (so far) in your biobanking career?

Honestly, the whole journey has been incredible. I love that no two days are ever the same — it keeps things exciting, meaningful, and very human.

But if I had to choose one moment that really stuck with me, it would be when a brother and sister — both biobank participants — finally received a diagnosis. They have an ultra-rare condition called UNC80, with only a handful of known cases worldwide. It was a truly bittersweet moment. On one hand, I was overjoyed that they finally had answers — and that the biobank played a role in getting them there. On the other hand, it was heartbreaking because there's no treatment available (yet).

Moments like that remind me why we do this work — to bring hope, even if the road ahead is still long.



The penultimate Conference Blog is now available on the website. Click on the link below for a run down on all the Newcastle conference accommodation and some 'news' from the debate. Our Debate teams have been assembled and will be working on their strategies leading up to the event. The Debate is the last of our 2025 Seminar Series "Connecting the Dots: Upstream, Downstream and the Data Journey". Each debate team will be led by our Keynote speakers - and it is shaping up to be quite the event. The gloves are coming off and make no mistake - both teams are out to win!

Read the August blog on our conference website

[CLICK HERE](#)

2025 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

ABNA

DEBATE

Biospecimens with Associated Data
vs
Data with Associated Biospecimens

**THURSDAY
OCTOBER 23 2025**

NEWCASTLE CITY HALL

2:10PM - 3:00PM

TEAM BIOSPECIMENS

LEAD - DEB GARCIA
CATHERINE KENNEDY
CAROLYN HOGG

TEAM DATA

LEAD - GREG GROSSMAN
ALEX CALLEN
RODRIGO HAMEDE

HOSTED BY

**FREE ADMISSION !!
(WITH CONFERENCE REGISTRATION)**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:
BIT.LY/ABNA2025NEWCASTLE**

Careers in Focus

by Jennifer Byrne

Director of Biobanking-NSW Health, Professor of Molecular Oncology, University of Sydney

Welcome to the 3rd edition of “Careers in Focus”, where we talk about how we can promote and develop careers in biobanking and for biobankers. We also want to warm up conversations in preparation for the [ABNA 2025](#) conference in Newcastle, where we’ll hold a dedicated careers session.

So far, we’ve talked about **CV’s**, setting up **job alerts**, and ways to think about **your career direction**. I promised to talk about **career changes** this month, but on the way there, I realised that I’d forgotten to talk about an important career development tool. This is your position description, or more simply, your **job description**. By now, you could be wondering if I’m trying to write the most boring advice column possible. But bear with me. Job descriptions sound boring, but they’re important. They can work for you or against you, both in terms of progressing your career where you are, or when making your next move.

In talking about job descriptions, I’m assuming that everyone has one. If you’re not sure, or if it’s been a while since you checked, **today’s the day**. Everyone should have a copy of their job description, and like your CV, it’s important to revisit this regularly.

Job descriptions should include a position title, that maps to a salary scale and describes how you’re paid. The description should also include key responsibilities. If you’ve been in your role for a while, you might have experienced some “position creep”. Most job descriptions include statements like “from time to time, you’ll be asked to do other things...”. This is reasonable, as long as it’s “from time to time”. You might however find that you’re now regularly doing things that aren’t a key responsibility, or tasks that aren’t listed at all.

If your job description could be out of date, think carefully before taking further steps. Not all job descriptions can be easily updated. For example, in large organisations, some job descriptions are intentionally generic. However, this doesn’t mean accepting mismatches between your job description and your actual role. In next months’ column, we’ll discuss changing your job description, and different ways to go about this.

Is any of this advice helpful? What could I be doing better here?? Please write to me at:

jennifer.byrne@health.nsw.gov.au or at info@abna.org

WORKSHOP

Emerging Leaders and Biobanking Professional Development

Biobanking Evolving Through Time

Professor Jennifer Byrne

22 - 24 October 2025 Newcastle

Debra Leiolani Garcia

australasian
biospecimen
network
association

#ABNA2025Newcastle
bit.ly/ABNA2025Newcastle

Get Set for Seedy September!

Australasian Seed Science Scene Takes Centre Stage

By Dr Emma Dalziell

The University of Western Australia & Kings Park Science, Western Australian Government Department of
Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions

With winter drawing to a close (for most of us a least!), spring is finally in the air. As the days grow longer and warmer, and new green shoots begin to emerge, spring is a time of renewal and new beginnings. The season, which symbolises new growth and potential is the perfect time to turn our attention to the tiny powerhouses at the heart of it all: seeds! From the crops that feed us, to wildflower meadows that support an abundance of biodiversity, seeds are fundamental to life. The science of seeds, from dormancy and germination to genetic conservation, is a field of constant innovation. This year, Australia is poised to host not one, but two landmark conferences that will showcase seed research and conservation on both a national and an international scale. These events offer an unparalleled opportunity for delegates to connect, to share knowledge and forge new partnerships – and talk about all things seedy!

ISSS 2025: A global gathering in the green heart of Western Australia

From September 15-19 all eyes of the international seed science community will be on Perth, Western Australia as it hosts the [International Society for Seed Science \(ISSS\) Conference 2025](#). The event combines two of the ISSS's premier events, bringing together for the first time, the 15th Biennial ISSS conference, in conjunction with the Seed Ecology VIII conference.



The conference theme “Synergies in Seed Science” encapsulates its mission: To foster collaboration and inspire new connections within the global seed science community. More than 200 delegates and 115 speakers will gather at Frasers of Kings Park in the heart of the Western Australian Botanic Gardens for a week of scientific talks, workshops and field trips.

The choice of venue, Frasers Kings Park, is particularly significant. [Kings Park](#), a celebrated landmark, is situated on land of the Whadjuk Noongar people. It is home to the [Western Australian Botanic Garden](#), which plays a critical role in the conservation of the state's flora. The location not only provides a stunning backdrop but also serves as a living laboratory and a powerful reminder of the deep connections between cultural heritage, biodiversity, and scientific conservation efforts.

The International Society for Seed Science

[The International Society for Seed Science \(ISSS\)](#) is the preeminent international professional organisation of seed scientists and is committed to fostering and promoting research, education and communication in the scientific understanding of seeds. Founded in 1999, the Society publishes scientific research on seed biology in *Seed Science Research*, the official journal of the ISSS, coordinates and organises conferences, workshops and meetings related to seed science, provides support for educational activities in seed biology, including courses and webinars and is involved in political and public relations activities affecting seed research and utilisation.





Kings Park is home to the Western Australian Botanic Gardens, which features more than 3,000 Western Australian native plant species.

The 2025 conference will feature plenary keynote speakers from leading institutions around the world, including the University of Warwick, Royal Holloway University of London, and the Millennium Seed Bank of the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew in the UK, Palacký University Olomouc in the Czech Republic, The French National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and Environment (INRAE), Xinjiang Agricultural University in China and the Australian PlantBank at the Botanic Gardens of Sydney.

The scientific program is designed to be comprehensive, covering a vast spectrum of topics that reflect the seed life cycle and societal impact of seeds, including Developmental Biology, Dispersal & Predation, Seed Banks & Soil Seed Bank Dynamics, Dormancy & Germination, Seed Conservation & Gene Bank Management, and Seeds & Society - covering utilisation and policy.

Beyond the technical sessions, delegates of ISSS 2025 can experience the amazing diversity of landscapes in the south-west of Western Australia with fieldtrips showcasing post-mining ecological restoration in the jarrah forest, the incredible biodiversity and kwongan heathland of Lesueur National Park or the University of Western Australia's Shenton Park Field Station, home to a large scale agricultural and ecological restoration research facility. The latter will also include a formal launch of Emergence Ecotech, a new spinout company offering unique services to the restoration industry using custom-designed seed processing and precision seeding machinery.



Fantastic field trips: ISSS 2025 delegates have the opportunity to visit jarrah forest restoration sites (left image, a biodiverse seed mix used in restoration), the stunning scenery of Lesueur National Park (middle), or the UWA Shenton Park Field Station (right image: the "seed flamer", which uses a drum which heats seeds and effectively remove fluffy appendages without damaging the seeds, making seeds easier to pour and plant during the revegetation process).

Finally, ISSS 2025 will offer invaluable networking opportunities, social functions, and student-focused events, ensuring that the next generation of seed scientists is supported and inspired.

The Australian Seed Bank Partnership

The Australian Seed Bank Partnership (ASBP) is a not-for-profit alliance of 16 organisations, bringing together seed banks in Australia's leading botanic gardens, state environment agencies and NGOs.



The ASBP aims to deliver a national effort that contributes to the conservation of Australia's native plant diversity through collaborative and sustainable seed collecting, banking, research and knowledge sharing. Launched in 2025, the Australian Virtual Seed Bank, a major initiative of the ASBP supported by the Atlas of Living Australia is a new, centralised, open-access digital repository of native seed information for collections held across the partnership. Currently the AVSB provides access to data from 11 Australian seed banks, including information for almost 60,000 accessions and data from over 17,000 germination trials.

ASSC 2025: Seeding connections locally in Victoria

September is a whirlwind of us Aussie seed scientists, as just a few days after ISSS 2025 concludes, the focus shifts to Horsham, Victoria for the 3rd Australasian Seed Science Conference (ASSC) 2025, running from September 22-25 and hosted by the Australian Grains Genebank and the Australian Seed Bank Partnership.



The theme, "Seeding Connection: Bridging knowledge, policy and practice across agriculture and conservation," highlights the conference's practical and community-oriented approach, and is designed as a platform for Australasian seed researchers, industries, policymakers, and local communities to converge and address the scientific, legal, and policy challenges facing the regions seed resources.



The Australian Grains Genebank in Horsham, Victoria is home to 200,000 accessions of seeds of agricultural importance from around the world. The state of the art facility (left - [image credit](#)) officially opened in 2014 also includes a purpose-built plant quarantine facility (right - [image credit](#)).

The conference will delve into a diverse range of topics, including:

- The crucial role of Indigenous knowledge in seed management and land stewardship.
- Exploring the factors that affect seed sourcing and supply and how advances in technologies and targeted strategies can maximise genetic diversity and guide applications in biodiversity conservation, restoration and grain crop production
- The development of effective seed conservation policies and legal frameworks.
- The application of cutting-edge genomic and digital technologies to improve seed science.
- Technological solutions for addressing the impacts of climate change on seed viability and crop resilience.

Keynote speakers include Dr Aisyah Faruk from the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew (UK), Jacob Birch a Gamilaraay man living and working on the Sunshine Coast and wild grains researcher at the University of Queensland, Dr Paul Gibson-Roy from the University of Melbourne, Prof Mathew Lewsey from La Trobe University and Dr Fiona Hay from Aarhus University (Denmark). A further 50 speakers are presenting work within the thematic program.



Left to right: Dr Aisyah Faruk, Mr Jacob Birch, Dr Paul Gibson-Roy, Prof Mathew Lewsey and Dr Fiona Hay

Delegates will also be able to participate in a range of field tours to local nurseries and restoration sites, or the state-of-the-art facilities at the Australian Grains Genebank and Grains Innovation Park.

ISSS 2025 and ASSC 2025: More than just seeds

For the ABNA community, these conferences are more than just academic gatherings for researchers in the seed space; they are critical opportunities to strengthen and expand the field of biospecimen management. The principles of seed banking and conservation directly mirror those of other biospecimen repositories. The challenges of long-term storage, genetic integrity, data management, and ethical considerations are shared across all domains. The knowledge shared at these conferences on topics like seed viability, molecular diagnostics, and the impact of environmental factors on specimen quality is directly transferable to the work of biobankers managing plant, animal and human collections.

From the stunning conservation focus of Kings Park in Perth to the practical, community-driven spirit of Horsham, these conferences celebrate the synergy of global research and local action. For biobankers, researchers, and professionals dedicated to the preservation of life's biological treasures, these two events are a chance to learn, connect, and contribute to the vital work of securing a biodiverse and sustainable future for our planet.

ISSS
CONFERENCE 2025
15-19 SEPTEMBER | PERTH, WA

15th Biennial ISSS Conference | Seed Ecology VIII
15 – 19 September 2025 | Fraser's Kings Park, Perth, Western Australia

CONFERENCE PROGRAM UNVEILED

- Over 200 delegates
- 180+ talks and posters
- 4 workshops
- 3 field trips

Explore the full program now and start planning your participation at this landmark event!



Best Practices in the Ethical Review of Clinical Trial Data Sharing Workshop

Join [CT:IQ](#), [Bellberry Ltd](#) and the ARDC in Sydney for a Best Practice Workshop on the Ethical Review of Clinical Trial Data Sharing. This in-person event brings together ethics review body (ERB) chairs and members, researchers, consumers, and policy makers to explore how to apply ethical and legal principles to the sharing of clinical trial data.



The workshop will feature presentations from privacy experts, ERB representatives, and consumers on their expectations and perspectives around best practice data sharing. A key highlight will be the presentation of results from the CT:IQ and ARDC Ethical Review Body Benchmarking Activity, which gathered responses from a diverse range of Australian ERBs on a hypothetical clinical trial data sharing application.

Click [HERE](#) or on the image above to register for this workshop

Review of the Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes

The purpose of the Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes (the Code) is to promote the ethical, humane and responsible care and use of animals used for scientific purposes. It provides guidance for investigators, institutions, animals ethics committees, animal carers and all those involved in the care and use of animals for scientific purposes.

The Code is adopted into legislation in all Australian states and territories. It is endorsed by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), Australian Research Council, Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation and Universities Australia. Compliance with the Code is a prerequisite for receipt of NHMRC funding.

NHMRC is reviewing the 8th edition of Code (2013, updated 2021). The review commenced following NHMRC’s consultation with state and territory governments, relevant Commonwealth Departments, and the co-endorsers of the Code (Australian Research Council, Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation and Universities Australia).

The aim of the review is to ensure that the Code continues to provide guidance that is current, fit for purpose and reflects current scientific evidence and ethical and social views about the care and use of animals for scientific purposes.

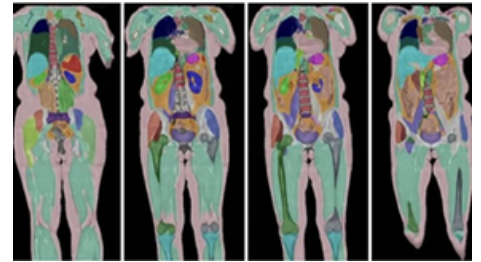
Phase	Key milestone	Estimated timeframe
1	Planning and committee establishment.	April 2025 – August 2025
2	Review of the 8th edition of Code and preparation of the draft 9th edition for public consultation.	July 2025 – June 2026
3	Public consultation and analysis of feedback.	July 2026 – December 2026
4	Revision of the draft 9th edition of the Code in response to consultation feedback. <i>(Timeframe is dependent on quantity of consultation feedback.)</i>	January 2027 – September 2027
5	Finalisation, review by NHMRC Council and release by NHMRC CEO.	October – December 2027

You can subscribe [HERE](#) to keep upto date on the Code Review.

Biobanking in the News

BIGGEST HUMAN IMAGING STUDY SCANS 100,000TH PERSON

The UK Biobank continues to enable high quality research, marking a new landmark for the collection by reaching 100,000 whole body images. Five different types of MRI, X-ray and ultrasound machines are used to scan each participant, with #100,000 being a recent retiree, Steve, from southern England. The full story is available on the [BBC News website](#).



NEW CSIRO "LIBRARY OF BIODIVERSITY" OPENS IN CANBERRA

Over 150 years of collected specimens have been rehoused in a new state-of-the-art CSIRO building that has now officially opened in Canberra. The architecturally significant building named 'Diversity' includes bushfire and pest resistant temperature controlled vaults housing millions of specimens including birds, plants, and insects. As well as ensuring preservation, cutting-edge facilities are featured, enabling genomic studies and digitisation of the collection. Read more about this facility on the [ABC News website](#).



EVIDENCE OF BLAST WAVE INJURY FOUND IN AN AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER'S BRAIN

The Australian Veterans Brain Bank has recently confirmed that blast wave injury has now been found in a brain of a deceased Australian veteran, following similar findings made with US veterans which were first recognised in 2016. Blast waves occur when weapons are fired, generating high-pressure shocks to the body. Around 450 past and present soldiers have pledged their brains to the Australian Veterans Brain Bank with 6 received and 4 analysed so far. For more about this story, see the [ABC News website](#).

HANDFISH FALLS FROM THE SKY IN HOBART CBD



An unlikely discovery by an office worker on a Hobart city centre street has been handed in to the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery. The distinctive, endangered, spotted handfish was possibly being carried by a seabird when it was dropped, and is now a rare example of an adult spotted handfish within the state collection. For the full story, visit [ABC News](#).

If you have any suggestions for a short article for ABNA Exchange, please contact: info@abna.org.au

Content deadline for the September edition 19.09.25



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