



australasian  
biospecimen  
network  
association

# BIO-BABBLE

AUSTRALASIAN BIOSPECIMEN NETWORK ASSOCIATION  
NEWSLETTER  
JULY 2019

## 2019 ABNA Committee

RRRESIDENT: Pamela Saunders  
VICE PRESIDENT: Anusha Hettiaratchi  
TREASURER: Valerie Jakrot &  
Catherine Kennedy  
SECRETARY: Judith Heads & Leanne  
Wallace

OTHER COMMITTEE MEMBERS:  
Nina D'Vaz, Cassandra Griffin,  
Bharvi Manek, Kathleen Phillips,  
Ussha Pillai, Georget Reaiche, Phillip  
Shepherd, Helen Tsimiklis

## Message from ABNA President & Conference Update

As ABNA President I am very proud to announce the 2nd anniversary edition of the ABNA newsletter BioBabble. I would like to thank our BioBabble subcommittee led by Anusha Hettiaratchi and assisted by Georget Reaiche and Cassandra Griffin for their ongoing journalistic endeavours.

The committee would value having our ABNA members/readers submit articles of interest for inclusion in our publication. The ABNA committee will continue to bring information of interest to Australasian Biobankers so please contribute and help us make BioBabble a relevant member driven publication. Let us know about your biobank, an event you are hosting or issues of general interest relating to biobanking.

Our exciting conference programme will be held over 2 ½ days in Cairns at the beautiful Pullman Cairns International.

Two workshops will be held on Wednesday afternoon featuring NATA accreditation and the ongoing selection of software to manage our precious samples and data.

We are pleased to announce the following confirmed speakers to date:

Dr. Fay Betsou: Integrated Biobank of Luxembourg (IBBL)  
Prof. Peter Watson: University of British Columbia Pathology (see Peter's bio below)  
Prof. Jennifer Byrne: University of Sydney / ANZCHOG Biobanking Network  
Prof. Anna De Fazio: Westmead  
Lauren Meyers; OTLET  
Gillian Treloar: NATA  
Dr. Jenny Lee: Medical Oncologist

**Conference registration will open 5 August 2019 via the ABNA website.**

**PETER WATSON** is Professor of Pathology at University of British Columbia and Staff Pathologist and Senior Scientist at the BC Cancer Victoria, and an adjunct professor in the Department of Biochemistry and Microbiology University of Victoria. He is the Director of Biobanking and Biospecimen Research Services (BBRS) which is a research infrastructure group that encompasses an active biobank (Tumour Tissue Repository) and a biobanking support unit (Office of Biobank Education and Research). He also leads the Canadian Tissue Repository Network (CTRNet) that maintains and operates biobank quality platforms including the CTRNet biobank certification program which is accessible nationally and internationally with over 250 biobanks enrolled.

This program has also been adapted by stakeholders in other regions to support biobank quality including implementation as part of the NSW Health Statewide Biobanking Framework. He is also deputy editor for the international journal Biopreservation and Biobanking. Over the past 30 years he has maintained an active clinical pathology practice and a research laboratory program focused on the molecular pathology and biomarkers of progression and response to treatment in breast cancer. He is author of over 190 research publications including 46 articles on biobank classification, standards, sustainability, and utilization.



# SPOTLIGHT ON NEW ZEALAND BIOBANKS

Phillip Shepherd, Helen Morrin

New Zealand has a population of almost 5 million and an important component of our biobanks guardianship, oversight and governance is the inclusion of our indigenous Māori people's cultural values. Our biobanks have worked closely with local Iwi (tribes) to ensure that processes, practices and governance are informed and guided by our indigenous people so that Māori are comfortable with participating in biobanking.

New Zealand has two main open access (poly-user) biobanks with a focus on cancer, approved by the Health and Disability Ethics Committees for banking samples for Future Unspecified Research. The University of Auckland hosts Te Ira Kawai - the Auckland Regional Tissue Bank (ARTB) and the University of Otago, Christchurch hosts the Cancer Society Tissue Bank (CSTB), both national resources supported by the universities, District Health Board's and philanthropic donations.

## Te Ira Kawai - Auckland Regional Tissue Bank

The Auckland based ARTB has been established since 2010, initially established as Matatika Koiora - Middlemore Tissue Bank specialising in haematology malignancies, which was transferred to the University of Auckland to allow it to diversify its collection and become an Auckland Regional tissue bank in 2014. The Middlemore collection site retains its Māori name gifted by the local Iwi, Tainui. The ARTB collects from three Auckland sites and to date 6300 patients from our catchment population of 1.47 million have become donors. Many of these donors have donated more than once and their longitudinal sample sets and clinical data becomes increasingly valuable as time passes. The ARTB is a faculty resource and aims to be available to assist with all aspects of human sample collection, processing and storage within the University of Auckland and its partner District Health boards and external collaborators.

<https://www.aucklandregionaltissuebank.ac.nz/>



ARTB staff, from left: David Chen (tissue bank tech), Jason Copedo (med lab scientist genomics), Chandra Bhoothpur (med lab scientist genomics), Phillip Shepherd (tissue bank manager), India Wallace (tissue bank tech), Alice Rykers (tissue bank tech), Celestine Wong (tissue bank tech). Missing is Prem Sharma (tissue bank tech).

## Cancer Society Tissue Bank

The Christchurch based CSTB was established in 1996 and is a well accessed mature tissue bank with annotated clinical samples from adult and paediatric donors. To date 12,000 patients from our catchment population of 620,000 have become donors and gifted pre surgical bloods for serum, plasma, buffy coat, FTA card blood spots, and frozen and paraffin embedded tissues. Some donors have donated multiple times as their disease has progressed or they developed new conditions. Over 100 studies have used complex sample and data sets. The CSTB also houses clinical trial samples and additional biobanks within its facility.

<https://www.otago.ac.nz/mackenzie-cancer/tissue-bank/index.html>



CSTB staff, Helen Morrin (left), CSTB Curator, ISBER Vice-Chair, Science Policy Committee and Lucia Sinclair (right), CSTB, Tissue Bank Scientist.

# SPOTLIGHT ON NEW ZEALAND BIOBANKS

Both the ARTB and CSTB offer prospective collection for specific diseases or research that requires customised samples in addition to their core function of generic cancer and pre malignant sample collection. This value added service facilitating high quality research has been very well received by the research community and provides a necessary supplement to our philanthropic grants and partial cost recovery programs. To date there has been no national funding available for our two biobanks and we operate on tight budgets.

New Zealand has a wealth of mono and oligo user biobanks with collections of specific diseases or healthy cohorts, which are mainly hidden within institutions. This has been compounded by ethical legislative requirement that studies collecting samples and data for a specified purpose, who additionally consent for an optional 'future unspecified' component, are required to establish a separate biobank for those samples. Both ARTB and CSTB staff encourage all biobankers in New Zealand to join ABNA and benefit from its shared knowledge, advice and the collegiality of its members.

For more information on guidelines for biobanking and genomic research with Māori see: <https://abna.org.au/39636-2/>



## IBBL Biospecimen Proficiency Testing program

Have you considered the Proficiency Testing Programme offered by The Integrated Biobank of Luxembourg (IBBL)?

For details of the services available please follow the link below:

<https://www.ibbl.lu/ibbl-bioservices/biospecimen-proficiency-testing/>

The Dates for this year's programme:

20 May 2019: Registration opens online

23 August 2019: Registration closes

September 2019: Standardised samples will be shipped to your location

November 2019: Data submission deadline

February 2020: Your report(s) will be sent electronically

## The FNQ of Biobanking: Futureproof, Network, Quality

ABNA 17<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE

