

# compass

Awards edition 2020



Health  
Pathology

## NSW Health Pathology Awards 2020



Health  
Pathology

for all of  
**us**



NSW Health Pathology acknowledges the traditional custodians of  
the lands on which we work and pay our respects to  
ancestors and Elders, past, present and emerging.

We are committed to honouring  
Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples'  
unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and  
seas and their rich contribution to society.



Mimigar Wajaar Traditional Aboriginal Dance Group opening the event.



## A message from our Chief Executive Tracey McCosker PSM

I warmly welcome you to the special NSW Health Pathology Awards edition of Compass. It features and celebrates our inaugural NSW Health Pathology Awards 2020: Caring, Connecting and Pioneering – for all of us.

Our 5,000 plus staff across the state are committed to our purpose of creating better health and justice systems. We put people at the heart of all we do, treating every person, sample and result with utmost care.

Our inaugural awards night, held in February 2020, was focused around rewarding our people and services who go to extraordinary lengths, celebrating our expertise and achievements with a strong focus on our commitment to our RITE values and behaviours – Respect, Integrity, Teamwork and Excellence.

Initially the event was postponed due to the 2019/20 summer bushfires and this was held in the very early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, so in hindsight we were very fortunate to be able to celebrate together in this way.

The judges and I had the unenviable and challenging task of reviewing all 82 nominations. On the night, we had the pleasure of awarding 11 different teams and individuals for their outstanding achievement award and celebrated alongside all 27 finalists.

I would like to acknowledge and thank our generous sponsors who have partnered with us to help make our first ever awards event possible - Charles Sturt University's School of Biomedical Science and icare, and our supporting sponsor; Smart Salary.

Our response to the COVID-19 pandemic has really shown our caring, connecting and pioneering spirit, and there will be many more extraordinary efforts to recognise as we set our sights on 2021.

For now though, I hope you enjoy reading all about our award-winning staff and services and once again, I thank all our colleagues for their ongoing commitment and expertise during what has been an unprecedented year!



# **NSW Health Pathology Awards 2020**

**Caring, Connecting and Pioneering - for all of us**



## **Team awards**

Keeping people safe and healthy  
Delivering truly connected care  
Contributing to better health and justice systems  
Supporting our people  
Creating safer healthier workplaces  
Recognising our pioneering spirit

## **Individual awards**

Research excellence  
Collaborative, connected leader  
RITE staff member

## **Chief Executive award**



# Keeping people safe and healthy

## Forensic Toxicology Laboratory - FASS



Caring, connecting and pioneering – our Forensic Toxicology Laboratory works rapidly to detect and identify drugs and poisons in biological specimens. Each year it tests post-mortem samples from some 3,000 coronial cases in collaboration with our Forensic Medicine service. Recently, it's proved indispensable for its ability to quickly warn of new and dangerous drugs circulating in our community.

In August 2018, the Centre for Population Health (CPH) asked the lab to test a cluster of patients who had ingested an unknown substance. An unusual drug compound never before seen in NSW was identified and a Public Health Alert issued.

On the strength of that encounter, a new collaboration was formed. Over the 2018/19 summer music festival season, they developed and coordinated testing for severe drug-related illnesses at music festivals. While managing their normal workload, our Forensic Toxicology experts performed analysis for 70 drug toxicity cases, directly influencing the treatment and care of severely ill festival-goers. The team's expert assessments informed a coronial inquest into music festival deaths and will help shape public policy to improve safety for festival-goers and the wider community.

The collaboration earned Forensic Toxicology and the CPH a prestigious 2019 NSW Health Award and now an Inaugural NSW Health Pathology Award.



Jill Halliday, Brynley Munro, Lily Molinari, Santiago Vazquez, Melissa Natoli, Vanessa Shaw, Gauthami Kondagari, Rajeev Malhotra and Kamaneh Yazdani Zadeh.

# Delivering truly connected care

## Lismore Core Laboratory



Delivering truly connected care that is Closing the Gap is an achievement dear to the hearts of five scientific staff from our Lismore Core Laboratory. They volunteered to be trained to support multidisciplinary diabetes clinics for Aboriginal people in the Richmond area of Northern NSW.

The Goorie Diabetes Complication Assessment Clinics are for Aboriginal clients aged 15 and over who have Type 2 Diabetes or are at risk of developing it. They comprise a physician, GP, diabetic educator, dietician, ophthalmologist, pharmacist, podiatrist, renal nurse, exercise physiologist, our pathology staff and aboriginal health workers.

Our staff attend with a mobile 'lab' of two DCA Vantages, cholestect and urine dipstick reader. It's the first stop for attending patients.

They give a urine sample and have their bloods collected for testing on-site and any follow-up testing at our Lismore lab. Within 15 to 20 minutes, results are generated and put in file which patients take with them to the other health workers who provide lifestyle, diet and medication advice. When the clinics finish, our staff join case conferences advising on pathology test options for patients.

The team is building trust with Aboriginal patients and forging connections with the community, clinicians and health workers, as well as making a positive contribution to help close the gap in Aboriginal health outcomes.

We thank Karen Kennedy, Steve Alvarez, Trish Law, Lyndall Palmer and Peter Moon for their caring contribution to the health and wellbeing of Northern NSW Aboriginal communities.



Karen Kennedy and Trish Law.



# Contributing to better health and justice systems

## Genomics Randwick



For children with complex genetic or neurological disorders, normal chromosome studies deliver a diagnostic rate of only 5-10 per cent. For families with children in the 90 per cent, it is the difference between accessing treatments and clinical trials, and family planning information.

Our Randwick team knew that whole exome screening would be a game changer for these children and got to work. The testing process was validated. An in-house bioinformatics pipeline was built. Scientists, pathologists and clinicians were trained in data interpretation and how to generate meaningful diagnostic reports.

Now, the diagnostic rate for these children is almost 50%. It's a diagnostic rate that is among the highest in world for this type of complex genetics work. The team has established NSW Health Pathology as one of two major players in diagnostic genomics in Australia. They're receiving referrals from all clinical genetics units across Australia and the world.

Thanks to the team, Randwick Genetics is also now the largest genomics training laboratory in Australia. Its education courses run in Sydney and Hong Kong are regarded as genomics masterclasses.



Anna Richards, Michael Buckley, , Ying Zhu and Tony Roscioli.

# Supporting our people

## Roster Coordination Unit



Statewide automated rostering may be one of the great leaps forward in health administration. It can reduce costs, save time, increase transparency and efficiency as well as aid decision making – if it's used and used well.

Enter NSW Health Pathology's (NSWHP) Roster Coordination Unit (RCU). It was established in 2016 to support our transition to the single, statewide HealthRoster system. Before then, two separate systems were used and in many cases, support was still provided by local health districts. The team had a job on its hands to embed new practices and build relationships with roster managers and creators across NSWHP.

Today, the RCU supports 480 roster units, 380 roster managers and 37 roster creators, helping ensure we get paid accurately and on time. It's delivered on its promise to foster consistency in rostering practices, improved sign-off compliance and fewer errors in payroll finalisation which can add costs.

We are now one of the highest performing NSW Health agencies for rostering compliance, with some areas consistently achieving 100 per cent. In fact, we're often in the top three on the statewide leaderboard for fewest post-pay adjustments.



Nicole Talty with the winners - Nicole Ticehurst, Leish Hastie, Chelvi Vjayashankar and Rowena Williams.



# Creating safer healthier workplaces

## WHS and Recover @ Work



You know there's bigger issues in work health and safety (WHS) than stand-up desks when your organisation has a high-containment PC4 laboratory that can test for Ebola virus.

When we came together as NSW Health Pathology (NSWHP) in late 2012, it stood to reason that we should have our own WHS and Injury Management (IM) team. Yet these were still largely tied to the local health districts. Templates, policies and procedures for WHS and IM still related mostly to hospitals.

In 2013, a statewide team was established to create a dedicated WHS and IM management team to meet our unique needs. They went to work standardising WHS and IM practises

across our statewide organisation and instilling a stronger safety culture.

Workers compensation claims was a key area of focus. By 2015, the team's WHS framework had helped reduce our workers compensation premium by over \$1.5 million per annum and cumulative savings of around \$20 million. Claims reduced from 113 in 2013, to just 51 by June 2019.

Overtime, their dedicated efforts have reduced injuries and time spent off work. It has also improved WHS knowledge, delivering a healthier and safer work environment for all of us.



Mika Campbell, Susanne Gantert, Leanne Abernethy, Janet Barry, John Santangelo, Deepak Dhanji, Shondelle Heron, Imelda Daniel and Daniel Trazzera.

# Recognising our pioneering spirit

## Tweed Heads Laboratory and John Hunter Cytology Laboratory



'This is bloody brilliant' are words you don't hear from radiologists every day. But that's the verdict on a new digital cytology screening service developed by our resourceful Tweed Heads and John Hunter Cytology laboratory teams.

Increased demand for Endobronchial ultrasound-guided transbronchial needle aspiration (EBUS-TBNA) procedures at Tweed Heads meant us finding new ways to support the service. EBUS is a less invasive way to diagnose lung cancer and respiratory disease. A bronchoscope with a camera and ultrasound that can take on-the-spot biopsies of affected tissue is inserted into patients' airways.

Radiologists and respiratory clinicians wanted more guidance from cytologists at the time of collection to avoid repeat procedures and to

aid earlier detection of malignancies.

Our teams were already using Skype for Business for haematology review. By adding a bedside microscope and camera that could feed live images to Newcastle cytology screeners, they had the solution. Clinicians who needed convincing and asked where they could see such a system were told 'probably America'. They were astounded that something so innovative was being offered.

After extensive consultation with all parties, new equipment, software, processes and training were introduced and the service went live to rave reviews. Radiologists are now talking to cytologists during procedures to obtain real-time opinions which in some cases has provided faster diagnoses and treatment for patients with cancer.



Jacqui Simmonds Rosaria Errichiello, Wendy Wong, Katherine Younger and Rebecca Said.





# Leaders in regional health education

## We're building a stronger regional health workforce

At Charles Sturt University we're proud to be making a real difference to rural and regional communities by growing the rural health workforce.

Over the past 25 years more than 28,000 students have graduated from a Charles Sturt University health course, and at least 15,000 of them are from a regional or remote area of Australia.

### Discover our diverse portfolio of health courses

We have a long and successful history of delivering a broad range of both undergraduate and postgraduate health professional courses across our campuses and online including:

- Food science and nutrition
- Dentistry and oral health
- Health leadership and management
- Health, medical and rehabilitation science
- Medical laboratory science (pathology)
- Medical radiation science
- Medicine
- Mental health
- Midwifery
- Nursing
- Occupational therapy
- Paramedicine
- Pharmacy
- Physiotherapy
- Podiatry
- Speech pathology.

Find out more

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**Charles Sturt  
University**

The Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS)  
Provider Number for Charles Sturt University is 00005F. © Charles Sturt University, 2020. S1046





Lights, camera, action!



And the winners are...



Oh what a night!



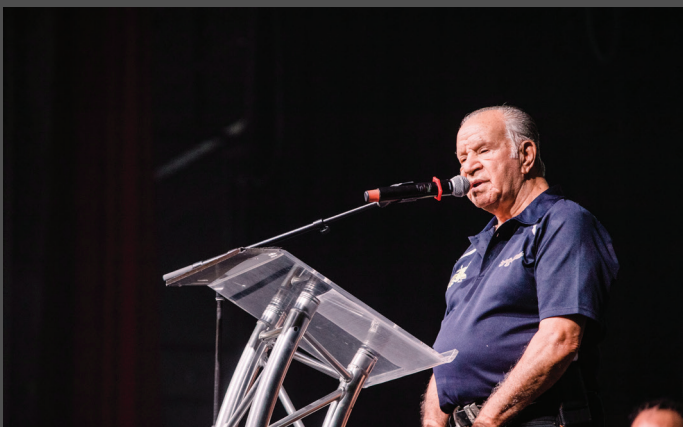
Thank you to Newcastle NEX for hosting us.



Freddy Stafford  
Hunter School of Performing Arts.



Chief Executive Tracey McCosker welcomes  
our finalists.



Uncle Bill Smith performs the  
Welcome to Country.



Uncle Bill Smith accompanied by Mimigar  
Wajaar Traditional Aboriginal Dance Group.





Master of Ceremonie Luke Escombe.



Secretary, NSW Health Elizabeth Koff.



Britt Coombs from Icare.



Solo by Mark Wells.



Chief Executive Award.



Phil Bwititi and Noelia Roman from Charles Sturt University.



Our 2020 Award Winners.

## Risk Education eXpress and NSW Health Pathology creating mentally healthy workplaces together

icare's Insurance for NSW is the largest public-sector insurer in Australia, delivering insurance and risk services to NSW government agencies.

Risk Education eXpress (REX) is our complementary risk education service and is available to all icare Insurance for NSW customers. REX learning opportunities help build capability for those in prevention, protection and recovery roles within the NSW government.



### **How REX helps NSW Health Pathology create psychologically safe workplaces**

Tackling mental health in the workplace requires a multi-faceted approach across prevention, early intervention, and recovery.

REX offers a comprehensive range of mental health programs – technical courses, experiential workshops and digital modules – for professionals in NSW Government.

icare Insurance for NSW is a proud sponsor of the  
NSW Health Pathology Awards 2020

For more information visit [my.icare.nsw.gov.au](https://my.icare.nsw.gov.au)

**RISK  
EDUCATION  
EXPRESS**



# Research excellence

## Geoffrey Kershaw



The future looks brighter for haemophilia patients thanks to the pioneering research of Geoffrey Kershaw. Our senior scientist in charge of coagulation at NSW Health Pathology East, Camperdown, is readying Australian laboratories and clinicians for rapid advances in haemophilia therapies.

In the past decade, new treatments have emerged that can improve quality of life for patients with this serious bleeding disorder. Gene therapy is here and extended half-life blood clotting factors can remain in patients' circulatory systems longer, reducing the need for injections from twice weekly to fortnightly. But such advances threaten to outpace traditional assays. New ways to measure and monitor novel therapies are needed for clinicians to treat and dose patients.

Enter Geoffrey's research project: Field Studies with Novel Haemophilia Products to help Guide Laboratories and Clinicians Treat Patients with Haemophilia. For the first time, Australian labs are working together to study new treatments in the field and create new assays. Previously, assay measurements for new therapies were reported only in clinical trials. Already, our Camperdown lab has the distinction of being the first in Australia to validate the chromogenic FIX assay, which has proven to be more accurate in measuring some novel therapies.

The research is part of a PhD through The University of Sydney under the supervision of Professor Vivien Chen at The ANZAC Research Institute/Concord Hospital.



Congratulations Geoffrey Kershaw.

# Collaborative, connected leader

Craig Scowen



Craig Scowen is using his skills as a data scientist to position NSW Health Pathology for a future where our services are measured not by volume, but by their value to patients.

Eighteen months ago, he initiated the groundbreaking Pathology Atlas of Variation project. Combining our data with that of public hospital emergency departments (EDs), it has opened a new window on test ordering that could improve patient outcomes and experiences.

The Atlas allows EDs to rethink long-established patterns of test ordering against patient outcomes combined with the unique needs of their local communities. It will help reduce unnecessary test ordering which can adversely affect patients and inflate costs.

Already, Craig's work with the Agency of Clinical Innovation has found the sooner tests are ordered, the less time patients spend in EDs. Intensive Care NSW is now also keen to understand how the Atlas can help this branch of critical patient care.

Craig's passion for data, expertise and ability to create relationships across LHDs and NSW Health agencies are the foundation on which this ground-breaking Atlas is being built. His work is strengthening our position as connected and trusted partners in the health system at both a statewide and local level.



Collaborative and Connected Leader - Craig Scowen.



## RITE staff member

Toni Geyer

joint winner

Those willing to take the reins in difficult times are a rare and valued commodity. Last year, Toni Geyer, from our Goulburn lab, rose to the occasion.

In September 2018, our four-member Cooma lab was hit with some unexpected staffing challenges. Two hospital scientists moved to other positions within NSW Health Pathology, a third was on long service leave and another recently returned from maternity leave but required time to complete routine retraining before she could commence normal duties.

The vacancies meant the laboratory could not provide the hospital with its usual scope of service in the short-term, that new POCT devices had to be swiftly introduced and that our after-hours service had to be temporarily suspended.

Into the breach stepped Toni. While managers sought to recruit and fill the two vacancies as quickly as possible, Toni relocated from her family home in Goulburn for two months to a motel in Cooma. She worked tirelessly to help ensure the lab could maintain a 24-7 service. She was hospital scientist, point of care expert, and relationship and customer service manager, and more.

Concerns about after-hours service were resolved by expanding point of care testing support to the hospital and increasing O-negative blood stock supplies as an interim solution.

Thanks to Toni's leadership and caring spirit, Cooma is now back on track and going from strength to strength.



Congratulations Toni Geyer.

## RITE staff member

David Humphries

joint winner

Families and carers of patients whose journey ends at Nepean Hospital are greeted with the kind, compassionate face of David Humphries. He is a mortuary technician at one of the handful of hospital mortuaries we manage or co-manage for our local health district partners.

Beyond a comforting and homely room used to console families when they make their final goodbyes, is a brightly lit room where their deceased loved ones are admitted. Dave takes care of them and makes sure they're released respectfully to funeral providers or for coronial post-mortem.

He works closely with hospital social workers to arrange viewings and ensure appropriate counselling is provided, but also performs myriad other tasks with boundless energy and enthusiasm. He receives stores and even fills up tearoom supplies without being asked so that other staff are not interrupted. Many are probably not even aware that Dave does this for them, and he never seeks acknowledgement.

David has a reputation for being one of the kindest people in NSW Health Pathology.



Congratulations David Humphries.



# Chief Executive award

## Forensic Medicine Wollongong



The team at Forensic Medicine (FM) Wollongong is small in size but big in ideas. They know delivering truly connected care in their complex world means chipping away at the big hurdles and spotting opportunities for smaller, but meaningful change.

Dr Bernie l'Ons is well aware of the international shortage of his forensic pathology colleagues and its effects. So he spearheaded a new program whereby registered medical officers (RMOs) at Wollongong Hospital can complete 10-week terms in forensic pathology.

The RMOs are learning about the coronial system while helping Dr l'Ons increase the quality and timeliness of post-mortem examination reports. It's hoped the program will in future grow the number of highly specialised forensic pathologists and work is underway to extend the program to other FM sites.

Forensic technician Lisa Bilton joined a working group advocating for the development of the Forensic Mortuary Practise degree in consultation with Forensic and Analytical Science Service (FASS) and Western Sydney University. She's now writing and delivering course content, lecturing, and preparing students for forensic post-mortem work.

Having seen colleagues absorb some of the trauma experienced by families during viewings forensic social worker Peta Burke now also trains fellow social workers and students, helping them to better look after themselves so they can support families and police with knowledge, care and confidence.

Last but not least, senior technician David Jones is working to integrate information technology by automating tasks so forensic pathologists can spend less time in the examination room.



Collecting the award on behalf of the team were David Jones and Dr Bernie l'Ons.



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For more information on our awards program please contact the Strategic Communication team.

[NSWPATH-News@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:NSWPATH-News@health.nsw.gov.au)

To enquire about future partnership opportunities for our upcoming awards programs please contact our Awards team.

[NSWPATH-Awards@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:NSWPATH-Awards@health.nsw.gov.au)

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