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## The Bulletin 480

### March 2024

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#### A message from the President

Dear <<First Name>> <<Last Name>>

Friday March 1st will see 218 guests gather for the Society's Annual Dinner and Awards presentations in the Strangers' Room, Parliament House, in Macquarie Street, Sydney. I look forward to seeing many of you there as we celebrate the Society, the four winners of our 2023 Career Excellence Awards, the four winners of our 2023 Discipline Awards, and the winners of the 2023 RSNSW Medal and Citation. We will also reflect on the thoughts of our after-dinner speaker, Saul Griffith.



On behalf of the Society, I express our appreciation to Pamela Griffith, Council Member and Chair of the Dinner Committee, and all its members for their flair and precision in creating what will be a wonderful experience. Ross Griffith applied his excellent organisational skills to bring everything together seamlessly, and the other members, Marian Kernahan, Joanna Mendelssohn, Selena Griffith, and Kathy Belov, rounded out the myriad of tasks required to bring such an event to life.

I acknowledge our Platinum Sponsor, Essential Energy, Gold Sponsor, UNSW Sydney, and Silver Sponsors – the Quantum Law Group through Zile Yu, and Yves Hernot – for their all-important support for the dinner, and Derivan Pty Ltd through Steven Patterson, and the Universities of Sydney, New South Wales, and New England for sponsoring tables. Finally, I thank the Hon Stephen Kamper MP, Member for Rockdale, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Sport, for hosting the Society in Parliament House for the evening.

We will be rounding out the presentations to our 2023 Award winners by celebrating our six 2023 RSNOW Postgraduate and Early Career Research winners at a unique event on 13 March 2024 hosted by Western Sydney University at its Parramatta South Campus, the Old Female Orphan School. The winners' short presentations and Q&A will be facilitated by renowned journalist and broadcaster, Robyn Williams AM FRSN FAA, presenter of the ABC Science Show. [Please register](#) and take advantage of the opportunity to inspect the permanent exhibition "A Changing Australia" in the adjacent Whitlam Institute from 5.45 – 6.15 pm, before the commencement of the presentations.

All members will have received an email on 19 February calling for nominations to Council, the governing body of the Society. Council, through its committees and other activities, is responsible for the planning and delivery of the Society's programs which, from 2024, include the four strategic initiatives of our ambitious, new Master Plan. These include securing the financial future of the Society by establishing a *Future Fund*, creating a program of *Activities with Impact*, *Engaging with its Members*, and building awareness of the Society and its activities through an *Effective Communication* program.

If you are a committed and motivated Member, Fellow, or Distinguished Fellow of the Society and wish to make a difference by contributing to its future, you should nominate. Nominations are sought particularly from younger members of the Society, and from women and other under-represented groups, in line with the Society's Diversity and Inclusion Policy. Council members serve a two-year term, with about half the Council elected every year. Nominations close at 5:00 pm AEDT on Friday, 8 March.

We work for the Society because we understand the need to enhance public discourse on a wide range of topics that are crucial to our future. Society members have excellent ideas to contribute. In that spirit, I look forward to hearing your ideas and suggested ways to bring them to fruition.

Susan Pond AM FRSN FTSE FAHMS  
[President](#), [Royal Society of NSW](#)

## For your diary

- [Western NSW Branch Meeting 2024-1](#) (Wednesday, 28 February 6.00 — 7.00 pm AEDT, Wagga Wagga Campus (Riverina Playhouse), Charles Sturt University and live-streaming), *Parasites, Australia's silent threat—coincidence, nature's hand, or policy complacency*, Professor Shookoofeh Shamsi, Professor of Veterinary Parasitology, Gulbali Institute, Charles Sturt University
- [RSNSW 2024 Annual Dinner and Presentation of Awards](#) (Friday, 1 March 2024, 6.00 – 10.00 pm AEDT, Strangers' Room, NSW Parliament House, 6 Macquarie Street, Sydney)
- [Ideas@theHouse: March 2024](#) (Wednesday, 6 March 2024, 6.30–8.00 pm AEDT, Government House Sydney (by invitation) and live streaming), *Shakespeare on politics: what can we learn?* John Bell AO OBE, Founder and Former Artistic Director, Bell Shakespeare
- [RSNSW 2023 Student and Early Career Research Award Presentations](#) (Wednesday, 13 March, 6.30 – 8.30 pm AEDT, Western Sydney University Parramatta South Campus, Old Female Orphan School (Building EZ.G.22), Cnr James Ruse Drive and Victoria Road, Rydalmere NSW), Speakers: Dr Jaime Alvarado-Montes, Ms Sasha Bailey, Mr Jayden McKinnon, Dr Jacinta Martin, Dr Ahbimanu Pandey, Dr Shoujin Wang. Chaired by Robyn Williams AM FRSN FAA, Presenter of the ABC Science Show.

- [Southern Highlands Branch Meeting 2024-2](#) (Thursday, 21 March 2024, 6.30 pm AEDT, RSL Mittagong, Carrington Room), *The antiquity of life: Oldest (3.7 billion years old) stromatolite fossils discovered in Greenland*, Professor Allen Nutman, School of Earth, Atmospheric, and Life Sciences, University of Wollongong
- [Frontiers of Science Forum 2024](#) (Friday, 22 March 2024, 5.15 pm for 6.00 pm AEDT, Concord Golf Club, 190 Majors Bay Road, Concord), *Exploring major discoveries and theories in physics, mathematics, biology, and chemistry*, a joint presentation of the Australian Institute of Physics (NSW Branch), the Teachers' Guild of NSW, the Royal Australian Chemical Institute, and RSNSW. Speakers: Prof. John Mattick (UNSW Sydney), Dr Renee Goreham (University of Newcastle), Prof. Katrina Jolliffe (University of Sydney), Assoc. Prof. Richard Garner (Macquarie University)
- [Western NSW Branch Meeting 2024-2](#) (Wednesday, 10 April, 4.00 – 5.00 pm AEST, Port Macquarie campus – Building 802, Room 2330/7, Major Innes Road – Charles Sturt University and live-streaming), *Out of Arabia: how ancient human history gave us modern lifestyle diseases*, Professor Alan Cooper, Professor of Evolution and Environmental Change, Charles Sturt University
- [157th Annual General Meeting and 1320th Ordinary General Meeting and Open Lecture](#) (Wednesday, 17 April 2024, 5.30 for 6.00–8.00 pm AEST, Metcalfe Theatre, State Library of New South Wales, Macquarie Street, Sydney), *Putting the 'Civil' Back in Civil Society*, Emeritus Professor Peter Shergold AC FRSN FASSA, Vice-President, Royal Society of NSW and Professor Kristy Muir, CEO, Paul Ramsey Foundation
- [Southern Highlands Branch Meetings 2024-3](#) (Thursday, 18 April, 6.30 pm AES, RSL Mittagong, Carrington Room), *Webb's Wondrous Window on the Universe*, Professor Fred Watson AM, Astronomer-at-Large, Australian Government
- [1321st Ordinary General Meeting and Open Lecture](#) (Wednesday, 1 May 2024, 6.30 – 8.00 pm AEST, Zoom webinar), *Brain Health Equity – a new frontier for healthy longevity*, Scientia Professor Kaarin Anstey FRSN FASSA FAHMS, Deputy Director, ARC Centre of Excellence for Population Ageing, Neuroscience Australia, UNSW Sydney

The Society's complete events program for the year is published in the [online Events Calendar](#), which is updated regularly.

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## News

### Australia Day Honours 2024–updated

The Society was delighted to learn of the awards to the following Society Fellows and Members whose names appear in the 2024 Australia Day Honours List.

*Please note that since the original news item was published, the Society has been notified of additional members who were honoured in the Australia Day Honours List. These people are identified in the list below by a prepended asterisk.*

The following have been honoured as **Officers of the Order of Australia (AO)**.

**Professor Ian Hickie AO FRSN FASSA FAHMS**, Professor and Co-Director, Health and Policy, Brain and Mind Centre, University of Sydney, for distinguished service to psychiatric research and reforms as an advocate for improved mental health care and awareness.

**(The late) Emeritus Professor Robin King AO FRSN FTSE** for distinguished service to engineering, to tertiary education, and to professional organisations through executive roles.

The following have been honoured as **Members of the Order of Australia (AM)**.

**Emeritus Professor Roy Green AM FRSN**, of the University of Technology Sydney, for significant service to business, and to tertiary education in the fields of science, technology and innovation.

**Emeritus Professor Gisela Kaplan AM FRSN**, of the University of New England, for significant service to science education through research into animal behaviour.

**(The late) Emeritus Professor Adrian Lee AM FRSN**, of the University of New South Wales, for significant service to tertiary education, to microbiology, and to professional organisations.

**Dr John Vallance, AM FRSN FAHA**, former State Librarian of New South Wales, for significant service to education, to library services and programs, and to the arts.

The following have been honoured with the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM).

**(\*) Professor Elizabeth New OAM FRSN**, Professor of Inorganic Chemistry, University of Sydney, for service to science as a researcher in chemical biology and molecular imaging.

The Council of the Society extends its sincere congratulations to all Members and Fellows that received honours.

Should the Society have missed the names of other Members and Fellows who have been included in the 2024 Australian Honours, please let us know by writing to [RSNSW Communications](#).

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## **Society Fellow, Barney Glover, appointed as Commissioner of Jobs and Skills Australia**

On 10 February 2024, the Minister for Skills and Training, The Hon. Brendan O'Connor MP, announced the appointment of **Professor Barney Glover AO FRSN FTSE**, the current Vice-Chancellor of Western Sydney University (WSU), as the new Commissioner of Jobs and Skills Australia.

The role of Jobs and Skills Australia, a statutory authority established in 2022 attached to the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, is to advise and assist the Australian Government and other stakeholders in decision-making on the current, emerging, and future skills and workforce needs of the



# **Australia Day 2024 Honours**



Australian economy, including the specific needs of regional, rural and remote Australia, and the development of new industries and technologies.

In congratulating Professor Glover on his appointment, Mr O'Connor commented that his "distinguished academic leadership and extensive experience made [him] eminently qualified for the role." Professor Glover will commence a five-year term commencing in April 2024.

Professor Glover was appointed Vice-Chancellor of WSU in 2014 and announced in December 2023 that he would not be seeking a further term in the role. During his time at Western Sydney, Professor Glover led the establishment of a high-rise campus in Parramatta, boosted the university's research outputs and rankings, increased student numbers, and substantially reshaped the university's engagement with Western Sydney's communities. Most recently, he has been an influential member of the Australian Government's review of universities, known as the "Accord", the final report from which was released on 25 February 2024. Previously, Professor Glover served as chair of the peak university body, Universities Australia, chair of the Innovative Research Universities group, and as chair of Rare Voices Australia — a not-for-profit organisation established to advocate for Australians living with a rare disease.

Prior to his WSU appointment, Professor Glover, a mathematician by training, served as Vice-Chancellor of Charles Darwin University (2009–2014), Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) at the University of Newcastle (2006–2009), and as Pro Vice-Chancellor (R&D) at Curtin University. He was made an Officer of the Order of Australia on Australia Day 2019 for "distinguished service to tertiary education, to professional associations, and to cultural organisations", a Fellow of the Royal Society of New South Wales in 2017, and a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering in 2016.

The Council of the Royal Society of New South Wales extends its warmest congratulations to Professor Barney Glover on his new appointment.

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## **Vice-President Peter Shergold included in SMH expert panel on effects of school closures during the COVID pandemic**

The Sydney Morning Herald of Monday, 19 February 2024 led with the headline '[We made the wrong decisions: COVID-era mass school closures condemned](#)'. The SMH had convened a panel of Australian experts to examine the impacts that school closures had on students' education and well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. Included in the panel was Society Vice-President, Emeritus Professor Peter Shergold AC FRSN FASSA, in his capacity as the chair of the NSW education regulator. The SMH panel called for a plan for future closures that puts the long- and short-term needs of children at the centre of policy decision-making.



Professor Shergold commented that "the lingering effects of school shutdowns on students, teachers, and parents underscored the importance of scrutinising unilateral decisions by state governments to mandate remote learning." He noted that "The danger of school closures, which we always knew, was that it was going to accentuate disadvantage. After the closures in early 2020, we made the wrong policy decisions about closing school systems."



“It was clearly the Commonwealth position to keep school systems open,” Shergold said. “It was states that were unpersuaded, and that’s why this present inquiry seems so bizarre that we’re not going to address their policy responses. It’s a crucial part of the story and ensuring that we’re better prepared for the next pandemic.” He said early in 2020 there “was a fog of war, and there was ill preparation – in Australia between federal and state governments – for a pandemic”, noting it was understandable schools closed in the first months.

For interested readers, the full article is available on the Sydney Morning website at the link above.

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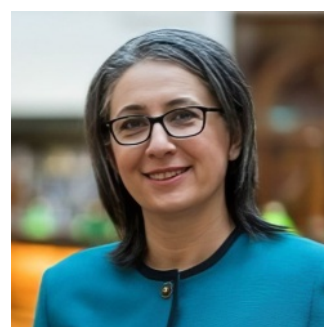
## Events

### Western NSW Branch Meeting 2024-1

**Parasites, Australia's silent threat—  
coincidence, nature's hand, or policy complacency**

**Professor Shookoofeh Shamsi**

**Professor of Veterinary Parasitology  
Gulbali Institute for Agriculture, Water & Environment  
Charles Sturt University**



**Date:** Wednesday, 28 February 2024, 6.00 — 7.00 pm (AEDT)

**Venue:** Wagga Wagga Campus (Riverina Playhouse), Charles Sturt University and live-streaming

**Entry:** No charge

**Registration:** [Registration through Humanitix](#) is required

**All are welcome**

**Please register now**

*This meeting is a joint presentation of Charles Sturt University and the Western NSW Branch of the Royal Society of NSW.*

**Summary:** Australia is facing a surge in parasitic incidents that have increasingly captured news headlines: Australia gives up the fight against eradication of bee mites; oyster farms are under siege from deadly parasites; native fish fall victim to gut-burrowing invaders, and the country's unique native wildlife faces the deadly threat of cat-borne parasites. Most shockingly, a python worm was recently extracted from a human brain. Despite this growing wave of parasitic challenges, Australia's tendency to downplay their significance is surprising.

This public lecture explores the heart of this enigma, exploring the origins, implications, and possible human factors contributing to Australia's parasitic predicaments. Are these occurrences mere coincidences, driven by the forces of Mother Nature, or do they serve as stark reminders of complacency within the policy-making domain?

**Professor Shookoofeh Shamsi** has qualifications in veterinary and medical sciences (parasitology) and skills in conventional morphological and molecular parasite identification

methods. She is a taxonomist with a huge interest in identifying species, who goes beyond taxonomy to understand parasitism, ecology, evolution, ecosystems, and how parasite populations change in response to anthropological and environmental factors. She is currently leading and collaborating on various research projects focussing on the health, welfare, behaviour, biosecurity, and biology of both wild and farmed, as well as a range of terrestrial and aquatic, animals. Recently, her research focus has broadened to include the culture of indigenous Australians in lessons of sustainability.

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## Ideas@theHouse: March 2024



**Ideas@theHouse**

**presented by**

**Her Excellency the Honourable  
Margaret Beazley AC KC, Governor of NSW**



**Shakespeare on politics — what can we learn**

**John Bell AO OBE**

**Founder and Former Artistic Director  
Bell Shakespeare**

**Date:** Wednesday, 6 March 2024, 6.30 – 8.00 pm AEDT

**Venue:** Face-to-face (by invitation for Society members) and live streaming from Government House Sydney

**Registration:** Society members will have received an email inviting them to register to receive a formal invitation from Government House. A link to the live stream will be published on the website and in a subsequent *Bulletin*.

**Entry:** No charge

**All are welcome to the live stream**

*Please note that Society members who have registered for a place at the face-to-face event at Government House Sydney will have already received their invitations. If you have yet to reply, please do so as soon as possible.*

**Please click here to join the live stream on  
Wednesday, 6 March at 6.30 pm AEDT**

**Summary:** John Bell will present a brief survey of the political scenarios in Shakespeare's plays — Tragedies, Histories, and even the Comedies — in the context of these three questions. How do his observations resonate with us now? What can we take from them to confront the dilemmas we face today?

**John Bell** is the founder of Bell Shakespeare and one of Australia's most acclaimed theatre personalities. In a career of acting and directing, John has been instrumental in shaping the Australian theatre industry as we know it. After graduating from Sydney University in 1962, John worked for the Old Tote Theatre Company, all of Australia's state theatre companies, and was an Associate Artist of the Royal Shakespeare Company in the United Kingdom. As co-founder of Sydney's Nimrod Theatre Company, John presented many productions of landmark Australian plays including David Williamson's *Travelling North*, *The Club*, and *The Removalists*. He also initiated an Australian Shakespeare style with Nimrod productions such as *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Macbeth*.

In 1990 John founded the Bell Shakespeare Company where his productions included *The Winter's Tale*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Hamlet*, *Romeo And Juliet*, *The Taming Of The Shrew*, *Richard 3*, *Pericles*, *Henry 4*, *Henry 5*, *Julius Caesar*, *Antony And Cleopatra*, *The Comedy Of Errors*, *Wars Of The Roses*, *Measure For Measure*, *Macbeth*, and *As You Like It*, as well as John Webster's *The Duchess Of Malfi*, Goldoni's *The Servant Of Two Masters*, Gogol's *The Government Inspector*, and Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist*. His Shakespeare roles include Hamlet, Shylock, Henry V, Richard III, Macbeth, Malvolio, Berowne, Petruchio, Leontes, Coriolanus, Prospero, King Lear, Titus Andronicus, and Falstaff. He played the title role in co-productions with Queensland Theatre Company including: *Richard 3*, Heiner Müller's *Anatomy Titus Fall Of Rome: A Shakespeare Commentary* and performed the role of Mephistopheles, in *Faustus*. John directed *Tosca* and *Carmen* for Opera Australia, *The Rake's Progress* for the Victorian Opera and has also directed a production of *Madame Butterfly* for an Oz Opera national tour. John performed the role of the Professor in Sydney Theatre Company's production of *Uncle Vanya*, presented in association with Bell Shakespeare which also toured to Washington and New York.

John played the leading role in *The Father* for the Sydney Theatre Company and the Melbourne Theatre Company in late 2017 and directed and starred in *Diplomacy* for Ensemble Theatre in 2018. He toured the country throughout 2018 with Simon Tedeschi in two shows *Enoch Arden* and *Bright Star*. John also appeared in two television series aired in 2019, *Diary Of An Uber Driver* for ABC and *Lambs Of God* for Fox Television. In 2019, John played the title role in Moliere's *The Miser* for Bell Shakespeare. 2021 saw John in the highly successful *Grand Horizons* for Sydney Theatre Company and a welcome return season in 2022 at Sydney Theatre. 2022 had John collaborating with Simon Tedeschi on a number of shows around the country including 'Words And Music' and 'With Love, Amadeus'. John also performed his one-man show on Shakespeare 'One Man In His Time' in Sydney and Melbourne for Bell Shakespeare as well as another one-man show 'A Few Of My Favourite Things' at the Edinburgh Festival. He also featured with the Australian Haydn Ensemble in *Haydn Speaks*. At the end of 2022, John starred in a production of 'A Christmas Carol' for the Ensemble Theatre. 2024 will see John appearing at Blackheath Chamber Music Festival as well as with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and Umberto Clerici plus further dates planned with Simon Tedeschi.

John Bell is an Officer of the Order of Australia and the Order of the British Empire. He has an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from the Universities of Sydney, New South Wales, and Newcastle. In 1997, the National Trust of Australia named him as one of Australia's Living Treasures. In 2003, the Australia Business Arts Foundation awarded John the Dame Elisabeth Murdoch Cultural Leadership Award. His many awards as an actor and director include the Helpmann Award for Best Actor and Best Supporting Actor (*Richard 3*, 2002 & *Jaques* in *As you Like It*, 2015) and nominated for Best Support Actor and Best Actor (*Uncle Vanya*, 2011 and *The Father*, 2017), a Producers and Directors Guild Award for Lifetime Achievement and the JC Williamson Award (2009) for extraordinary contribution



to Australia's live entertainment industry, and the 2010 Sydney Theatre Award for Lifetime Achievement in recognition of his extraordinary career as an actor, director, and producer. John is the founder and chair of The Bouddi Foundation for the Arts, based on the NSW Central Coast, dedicated to supporting young artists of all genres.

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## RSNSW 2023 Student and Early Career Research Award Presentations

### Royal Society of New South Wales 2023 Student and Early Career Research Award Presentations

**Dr Jaime Alvarado-Montes, Macquarie**  
**Ms Sasha Bailey, Sydney**  
**Mr Jayden McKinnon, Wollongong**  
**Dr Jacinta Martin, Newcastle**  
**Dr Abhimanu Pandey, ANU**  
**Dr Shoujin Wang, UTS**

chaired by

**Robyn Williams AM FRSN FAA**  
**Presenter, ABC Science Show**



**Date:** Wednesday, 13 March 2023, 6.30 pm AEDT

**Venue:** Western Sydney University Parramatta South Campus, Old Female Orphan School (Building/Room EZ.G.22), Cnr James Ruse Drive and Victoria Road, Rydalmere NSW 2116.

[Further information](#) about the venue is available at the preceding link.

**Registration:** [Registration through Membes](#) is required

**All are welcome**

**Please click here to register**

*The evening's program comprises six short talks presented by PhD research candidates, who have been awarded the Society's Jak Kelly Award and the Royal Society of NSW Scholarships for 2023, and early career researchers who have been awarded Royal Society of NSW Early Career Citations.*

*This unique event will be facilitated by renowned journalist and broadcaster, [Robyn Williams AM FRSN FAA](#), presenter of the ABC Science Show, and will be hosted by Western Sydney University in the historic precinct of the Female Orphan School on the Rydalmere campus of the University.*

*[Free parking](#) will be available and refreshments will be kindly provided by WSU following the event. Registration is free but is capped at 64 places.*

*An opportunity to inspect the permanent exhibition "A Changing Australia" in the adjacent Whitlam Institute has been arranged for 5.45 – 6.15 pm, before the commencement of the presentations. Please indicate your intention to visit this display using the check box on the registration form to assist with an estimate of numbers.*

Information about [accessing the venue](#) and parking is listed below.

## Program

The speakers and the titles of their talk are listed below. More detailed information, including talk summaries and brief biographical details is available from the [website event notice](#).

- **Dr Jaime Alvarado-Montes** (Jak Kelly Award) — *Evolution of planetary systems under strong gravitational forces*
- **Ms Sasha Bailey** (Scholarship Winner) — *Title: TBA*
- **Mr Jayden McKinnon** (Scholarship Winner) — *Advancing mass spectrometry imaging towards the single cell resolution*
- **Dr Jacinta Martin** (Early Career Researcher Citation) — *Mitigating the impact of environmental pollutants on neonatal health and development*
- **Dr Abhimanu Pandey** (Early Career Researcher Citation) — *Harnessing the immune system to tackle bowel cancer*
- **Dr Shoujin Wang** (Early Career Researcher Citation) — *Responsible AI-powered news recommender systems for combating fake news*

## About the venue

The Parramatta South/Rydalmere Campus of Western Sydney University is located on the land of the Burramattagal clan of the Darug nation. The campus has a number of restored historical colonial buildings dating back over 200 years, the oldest being the Female Orphans School Building located close to the banks of the Parramatta River. Built in 1813 to house destitute young girls so they would not fall prey to the depravity of Sydney Town, it is the oldest three-storey building in Australia.

In the 1880s the building was repurposed into a psychiatric facility and the Rydalmere site was used for this purpose until the early 1980s. By the 1970s however, the Orphans School building largely fell into disrepair. In 1995 the site became part of the then-University of Western Sydney and restoration began in 2000.

The restored Orphan School Building now houses the Whitlam Institute, an archive of Whitlam-era documents as well as an exhibition on the history of the building and meeting rooms.

The building can be reached by a stroll from the car park through the historical campus buildings, notably the Orphan School Hospital, the infants and primary school, the Vernon building facing Victoria Road, and the Boiler house incorporated into a café and outdoor eating area.

Further information about the campus and its building can be found at the following links:

<https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/femaleorphanschool>

[https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/femaleorphanschool/home/parramatta\\_campus\\_heritage\\_wa lk](https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/femaleorphanschool/home/parramatta_campus_heritage_wa lk)

<https://atparramatta.com/discover/history-and-heritage/historical-places/female-orphan-school>

Old drawings and photos of the site are available from the [Dictionary of Sydney website](#).

## Accessing the Venue and Parking

The following information about accessing the venue has been provided by Western Sydney University.

- **Public transport** — visit <http://www.transportnsw.info/> for up-to-date travel information. WSU runs a free shuttle bus between the Parramatta City campus (169 Macquarie Street) and the Parramatta South campus. It is a two-minute walk to Parramatta station from the Parramatta City campus.
- **Shuttle Bus** —for campus shuttle info visit the [Shuttle bus webpage](#).
- **Bike** — There is a bicycle path running along the Parramatta River on the campus side. On-campus bike parking is available. Check the [cycling at Western Sydney University](#) page for locations.
- **Walk** — Parramatta campus (South), the main teaching campus, is located a five-minute walk from the Victoria Road bus stop.
- **Drive** — Entrance to the campus is via Victoria Road. [Parking for visitors on the Parramatta campus \(South\)](#) is available in the *blue bays* only, using a [temporary permit \(pdf download\)](#) that is valid between 4.00 – 10.00 pm on the day of the event (13 March). For further information, please see the [WSU parking webpage](#).

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## Southern Highlands Branch Meeting 2024-2

### The antiquity of life: Oldest (3.7 billion years old) stromatolite fossils discovered in Greenland

**Professor Allen Nutman**

**School of Earth, Atmospheric, and Life Sciences  
University of Wollongong**



**Date:** Thursday, 21 March 2024, 6.30 pm AEDT

**Venue:** RSL Mittagong, Carrington Room

**All are welcome**

**Summary:** Parts of Greenland's 3.8 and 3.7 Ga (billion years old) Isua supracrustal belt have rare domains where tectonic deformation is weak. This resulted in the unique level of preservation of Earth's oldest sedimentary rocks and thereby provides the world's best locale to seek the oldest life evidence.

For evidence of life, most reliance is placed on geochemical signatures that are interpreted as 'chemofossils', rather than physical structures. In addition, there is a single, best-preserved locality containing proposed relict stromatolites. Stromatolites are the commonest fossil from the Precambrian Earth, being carbonate-rich mounds built in shallow water by photosynthesising microbes. As such, the Isua stromatolites are the oldest tangible evidence of life on Earth.

The Isua stromatolites are much rarer than rock samples returned from the Moon and despite their remote location need protection from plunder. In contrast, more than 150 km away from Isua,  $\geq 3.85$  Ga sedimentary rocks on Akilia island experienced very high temperature ( $\sim 850^\circ\text{C}$ ) metamorphism and strong deformation. Nonetheless, proposed chemofossils in these rocks could provide the earliest evidence for life. Discovery of such old signs of life on Earth is important for Martian exploration, because 3.8-3.7 Ga years ago, Mars had oceans and rivers, and thus life could well have arisen there as well.

**Allen Nutman** is a researcher whose main focus is the early development of Earth, with diverse themes such as the origin and growth of continents, the start of plate tectonics, and evidence for early life. Allen received both his Bachelor of Science degree and PhD from the University of Exeter, U.K. He was awarded the Australian Academy of Science Mawson Medal in 2020.

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## Frontiers of Science Forum 2024

**Exploring major discoveries and theories in physics, mathematics, biology, and chemistry**

**Prof John Mattick, UNSW Sydney**  
**Dr Renee Goreham, University of Newcastle**  
**Prof Katrina Jolliffe, University of Sydney**  
**Assoc Prof Richard Garner, Macquarie Univ.**



*A joint meeting of the Australian Institute of Physics (AIP), the Teachers' Guild of NSW (TGNSW), the Royal Australian Chemical Institute (RACI), and the Royal Society of NSW. The Frontiers of Science Forum is proudly supported by the Laboratories Credit Union.*

**Date:** Friday, 22 March 2024, 5.15 pm for 6.00 pm AEDT

**Venue:** Concord Golf Club, 190 Majors Bay Road, Concord (free onsite parking is available)

**Entry:** \$25 (includes light refreshments from 5.15 pm)

**Enquiries:** [TGNSW Secretariat](#) Phone: 0418 318 418

**Program flyer:** [Available from the TGNSW website](#)

**Registration:** [Registration is required](#) by Thursday, 21 March 2024

**Please click here to register**

Ever since the Copernican revolution in the 16th century, science has been progressing at an exponential rate. Major discoveries and theories in physics, mathematics, biology, and chemistry have shaped our existence and civilisation, and continue to grow at an exponential rate. The Frontiers of Science Forum will have a group of international experts to give brief talks on the latest and future developments in their fields of knowledge.

### Program

5.15 pm: Registration and refreshments

6.00 pm: Welcome by Dr Frederick Osman FRSN FTSN FAIP FACE

6.10 pm: Presentations (25 minutes each)

8.20 pm: Panel Discussion and Q &A with Ian Woolf (Diffusion Radio)

9.00 pm: Vote of Thanks and Close

**Professor John Mattick AO FRSN FAA FTSE FAHMS HonFRCPA**

School of Biotechnology and Biomolecular Science, UNSW Sydney

### The misunderstanding of molecular biology

It has been assumed for decades that genes mainly encode proteins and that the mechanisms controlling human development are the same as those that regulate microbial physiology. It was a shock to find that less than 2% of the human genome encodes proteins and that the number

(about 20,000) and repertoire of human protein-coding genes are similar to a worm that only has 1,000 cells. While initially dismissed as 'junk', most of the human genome is, in fact, dynamically transcribed to produce large numbers of RNAs that do not encode proteins. These RNA are expressed from hundreds of thousands of enigmatic genetic loci called 'enhancers', which control the spatiotemporal patterns of gene expression using sophisticated mechanisms that involve liquid crystal physics and a plethora of feed-forward epigenetic modifications to direct the trillions of cell fate decisions that must be made with high precision between conception and adulthood.

#### **Dr Renee Graham**

School of Information and Physical Sciences, University of Newcastle

#### **Don't hold your breath: Revolutionising disease diagnosis through nanotechnology**

The urgent need for early detection of diseases, particularly in cases like lung cancer where symptoms often manifest late, underscores the significance of robust diagnostic methods. Presently, there is no established screening process for lung cancer before symptoms emerge, leaving patients at a disadvantage. Our research introduces an innovative approach harnessing nanotechnology to detect lung cancer using the simple act of breathing. Our ground-breaking method focuses on identifying cancer-specific particles, naturally occurring nanoparticles found in breath, as diagnostic markers. We now aim to engineer a portable and cost-effective device. We have successfully published a proof of concept and are currently advancing towards developing a prototype. Envision a future where lung cancer diagnosis occurs earlier, even before symptoms manifest, by merely analysing one's breath. More exciting are the applications for this work in viral and bacteria detection.

#### **Professor Katrina (Kate) Jolliffe FRSN FAA FRACI**

Associate Dean (Research), Faculty of Science, University of Sydney

#### **Taking inspiration from Nature: Design and applications of selective anion receptors**

Prof Kate Jolliffe's research is focussed on the design and development of novel molecular structures capable of selectively binding, sensing, extracting, and transporting negatively charged species (anions). These systems have numerous applications in areas as diverse as the environment and medicine. Most of these applications require anion recognition to occur in a competitive aqueous environment, but the design of receptors capable of selective binding to anions in water is fundamentally difficult to achieve. We take inspiration from the anion-binding proteins in Nature to design synthetic anion receptors that range in structure from small peptides to large macrocycles and combine both natural and non-natural binding motifs. We then exploit their selectivity in a range of applications.

#### **Associate Professor Richard Garner**

School of Computing, Macquarie University

#### **Computer games and games for computing**

It is a well-known caricature, and one firmly rooted in fact, that mathematicians like playing games. Typically, this is taken to mean something wholesome like backgammon rather than, say, World of Warcraft, but this raises the question: does mathematics have anything to say about computer games? In this talk, I will fail to answer this question, but say quite a bit about a related one, by explaining how mathematical games have quite a lot to say about computing. Rather than just a bit of fun, this kind of thing turns out to be extremely important for things like verification of robustness and security of mission-critical code.

#### **About the presenters**

**Professor John Mattick** is the Professor of RNA Biology at UNSW Sydney. He was previously the Foundation Director of the Institute for Molecular Bioscience at the University of



Queensland, Foundation Director of the Australian Genome Research Facility, Director of the Garvan Institute of Medical Research, and Chief Executive of Genomics England, where he developed the 2019- 2023 UK National Vision and Plan for Genomic Healthcare. Professor Mattick is best known for showing that most of the human genome is not junk, as previously thought, but rather is devoted to controlling human development. He has published over 300 scientific articles, which have been cited over 98,000 times. His honours and awards include the Australian Government Centenary Medal, the International Union of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Medal, the University of Texas Bertner Award for Distinguished Contributions to Cancer Research, and the Human Genome Organisation Chen Medal for Distinguished Achievement in Human Genetics and Genomic Research.

**Dr Renee Goreham**, a Senior Lecturer in physics at the University of Newcastle, is a leading expert in NanoBiotechnology. Having earned her PhD in 2014 from the University of South Australia, she has since held notable post-doctoral positions at Flinders University, the University of South Australia, and Victoria University of Wellington. In 2019, Dr Goreham joined the University of Newcastle, where her outstanding contributions were acknowledged with the Women in Research Fellowship in 2020. Her research which is deeply rooted in NanoBiotechnology allows for multidisciplinary research teams to form. In 2023, she was awarded the AIP NSW Community Outreach Award in Physics for her contributions to disseminating science to the community.

**Professor Katrina Jolliffe** is a supramolecular chemist received her BSc (1993) and PhD (1997) from the University of New South Wales. She held positions at Twente University, The Netherlands; the University of Nottingham, UK and the Australian National University before moving to the University of Sydney in 2002 as an Australian Research Council QEII fellow. She currently holds the position of Payne-Scott Professor at The University of Sydney, is the Associate Dean (Research) for the Faculty of Science, and is the NSW Node Leader for the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Innovations in Peptide and Protein Science (CIPPS). She is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science and has been awarded the Beckwith (2004), Biota (2006), Birch (2017), H. G. Smith (2018), and Margaret Sheil (2021) medals of the Royal Australian Chemical Institute and the Royal Society of Chemistry Macrocyclic and Supramolecular Chemistry Award (2023).

**Associate Professor Richard Garner** is an Associate Professor in Mathematics at Macquarie University, Sydney. He grew up in the UK, received his PhD in 2006 from the University of Cambridge, and spent some time on the postdoctoral circuit in Europe before joining Macquarie in 2011. He still says "whilst" rather than "while" but has at least learned to use the word "heaps" heaps. His research is in the mathematical area of category theory, which looks for patterns appearing across different areas of mathematics, theoretical physics, and computer science, and creates new languages for studying them. This research has been recognised, by among other things, his award of the Medal of the Australian Mathematical Society in 2017. He is also a keen teacher, and has tremendous fun explaining discrete mathematics and calculus to first- and second-year computing and engineering students; last year this was recognised through his receipt of a Vice-Chancellor's Student-Nominated teaching award.

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## **Western NSW Branch Meeting 2024-2**

**Out of Africa Arabia: how ancient human history gave us modern lifestyle diseases**

**Professor Alan Cooper**

**Professor of Evolution and Environmental Change  
Gulbali Institute  
Charles Sturt University**



**Date:** Wednesday, 10 April 2024, 4.00 — 5.00 pm (AEST)

**Venue:** Port Macquarie campus (Building 802, Room 2330/7, Major Innes Road), Charles Sturt University and live-streaming

**Entry:** No charge

**Registration:** [Registration through Humanitix](#) is required

**All are welcome**

**Please register now**

*This meeting is a joint presentation of Charles Sturt University and the Western NSW Branch of the Royal Society of NSW.*

**Summary:** As modern Humans moved Out of Africa and around the world just 55,000 years ago, they were forced to rapidly adapt to multiple new environments. As a result, humans are a great model animal system to study rapid genetic adaptation to climate change. DNA from ancient human skeletons (dating back as far as 46,000 years) shows how and when we moved Out of Africa and around the world, and how the critical step was a major phase of genetic selection for cold. Surprisingly, this appears to have occurred during a long unknown period when we were trapped in the Arabian Peninsula. During this ‘Arabian Standstill’ from around 80-55,000 years ago, major networks of genes involved in the regulation of fat, nerves, and skin all changed. Related genes were also incorporated from Neandertals, with whom we interbred just as we left Arabia. Surprisingly, many of these same genes are now associated with major modern diseases, from autism to obesity and cardiovascular disease, heralding a brand new field — evolutionary medicine.

**Alan Cooper** is the Professor of Evolution and Environmental Change at Charles Sturt University, Albury. His multi-disciplinary research integrates genomics, climate and environmental change, bioinformatics and mathematics, archaeology, microbiology, palaeontology, and medical sciences and has resulted in over 35 papers in *Nature* and *Science*. He has been centrally involved in the field of ancient DNA since the earliest days, working with Svante Pääbo (Nobel Prize 2022) and Allan Wilson at UC Berkeley in 1989. He was the inaugural Professor of Ancient Biomolecules at the University of Oxford (2001), and an ARC Federation, Future, and Laureate Fellow at the University of Adelaide from 2005-2020, where he built the Australian Centre for Ancient DNA. He has been the South Australian Scientist of the Year (2016/2017), won a Eureka Prize (2017), and led the multiple award-winning Aboriginal Heritage Project to reconstruct pre-European Aboriginal Australia history using ancient DNA. More information is available at [www.blueskygenetics.com](http://www.blueskygenetics.com).

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**1320th Ordinary General Meeting and Open Lecture**

## Putting the 'Civil' Back in Civil Society

**Emeritus Professor Peter Shergold AC FRSN FASSA**  
**Former Chancellor, Western Sydney University**

and

**Professor Kristy Muir**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**Paul Ramsey Foundation**



**Date:** Wednesday, 17 April 2023, 5.30 pm for 6.00–8.00 pm AEST

**Venue:** Metcalfe Theatre, State Library of NSW, Macquarie Street, Sydney

**Entry:** Members, \$10; Non-members, \$20; Students, \$5

**Registration:** [Registration through Membes](#) is required

**Drinks:** A cash bar will be available in the adjacent Macquarie Room from 5.30 pm

**All are welcome**

*The presentation will be preceded by the 157th Annual General Meeting and the 1320th Ordinary General Meeting of the Society. Please note the earlier starting time for the events due to the need to accommodate the formal business of these meetings.*

[Please click here to register](#)

**Summary:** *A conversation with Professors Kristy Muir & Peter Shergold*

A generation ago, it seemed that democracy was a given.

No longer.

Democratic governance appears fragile, under the threat from authoritarianism, xenophobia and populism. Trust in political leaders is wavering, thanks to the rise of AI and the increasingly powerful role of social media as a primary news source. In Australia, as elsewhere, public discourse seems riven by increasing social divisiveness and political discord. What's going wrong? Who or what is to blame? What can be done to restore a truly civil society?

Kristy Muir and Peter Shergold will argue across a contested terrain.

*Kristy Muir, a Professor of Social Policy at UNSW, is the CEO of the Paul Ramsay Foundation. Peter Shergold, Deputy President of the RSNSW, is Chair of the James Martin Institute for Public Policy. They previously worked together at the Centre for Social Impact, Kristy as CEO and Peter as Chair.*

### **Presenter Biographies**

**Professor Kristy Muir** is Paul Ramsay Foundation's Chief Executive Officer. She is also a Professor of Social Policy at UNSW Sydney Business School and Chair of Allan & Gill Gray Philanthropy Australasia.

Kristy has worked for more than three decades — as a support worker, academic, collaborator, leader, funder, and board director — with for-purpose organisations that enable children, families, and communities to thrive.

Kristy is a seasoned keynote speaker and internationally recognised leader. She has published widely and has delivered her insights on governance for social impact to hundreds of non-executive directors and CEOs through formal executive education programs. She founded the AGSM Governance for Social Impact course and the [Social Impact Leadership Australia](#) program which she currently teaches to for-purpose CEOs.

Kristy has undertaken more than 100 social impact projects with partners across sectors, including governments, not-for-profits, corporates, social enterprises, academics, and philanthropists. Many of these projects were designed to work alongside families and communities, and they spanned housing, education, employment, social participation, disability, mental health, financial resilience, wellbeing, and the social purpose sector.

Kristy was CEO of the Centre for Social Impact (2017-21), served as an elected academic member of UNSW's Council (2016-2021), and was a non-executive Director of the Community Council of Australia and the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Young People (ARACY). She has a PhD in social history and is a graduate of executive education at Harvard Business School and the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

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## Southern Highlands Branch Meeting 2024-3

### Webb's wondrous window on the Universe

#### Professor Fred Watson AM

#### Astronomer-at-Large Australian Government

**Date:** Thursday, 18 April 2024, 6.30 pm AEST

**Venue:** RSL Mittagong, Carrington Room

**All are welcome**



**Summary:** NASA's James Webb Space Telescope has been fully operational since July 2022. Its first science images made global headlines with their breathtaking clarity and depth, showing cosmic detail that was only hinted at by its smaller cousin, the ageing Hubble Space Telescope. They foretold a game-changing career of discovery that is now being realised with findings that challenge our understanding of the Universe's deepest mysteries. In this entertaining and copiously illustrated talk, Australia's Astronomer-at-Large describes the Webb, its images, its mission and its relationship to other upcoming facilities like the Square Kilometre Array and Europe's Extremely Large Telescope. Not to be missed!

**Fred Watson AM** is the Australian Government's Astronomer-at-Large, an outreach, advocacy, and advisory role created in 2018 in the Department of Industry, Science and Resources. Educated in Scotland at the universities of St Andrews and Edinburgh, Fred worked at both of Britain's Royal Observatories before joining the Australian Astronomical Observatory as Astronomer-in-Charge in 1995. Today, he is best known for his award-winning radio and TV

broadcasts, books, music, dark-sky advocacy, and the Space Nuts podcast. His work also includes providing expert input to the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space in Vienna on the issue of satellite constellation interference in astronomy. Fred has an asteroid named after him (5691 Fredwatson) but says that if it hits the Earth, it won't be his fault.

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## 1321st Ordinary General Meeting and Open Lecture

### Brain Health Equity – a new frontier for healthy longevity

**Scientia Professor Kaarin Anstey FRSN FASSA FAHMS**

**Deputy Director, ARC Centre of Excellence for Population Ageing  
Neuroscience Australia, UNSW Sydney**



**Date:** Wednesday, 1 May June 2024, 6.30 pm AEST

**Venue:** [Zoom Webinar](#)

**Entry:** No charge

**All are welcome**

**Please click here to join the  
Zoom webinar on 1 May at 6.30 pm**

**Summary:** In the past 20 years, evidence has accumulated on the importance of modifiable lifestyle factors, and chronic disease which impact brain health and increase the risk of late-life neurodegenerative conditions. In the past 5 to 10 years, the evidence on environmental risk factors for neurodegenerative conditions has strengthened. However, implementing strategies to reduce risk has typically focused on individual behaviour change. In this talk, Professor Anstey will provide an overview of this evidence on dementia risk reduction and brain health promotion and outline what individuals can do to reduce their own risk of dementia. She will then discuss the socio-demographic and socio-economic factors that enable or prevent brain healthy lifestyle and go on to present an argument that brain health inequity is one of the largest challenges to society and governments' aspirations for healthy ageing.

**Scientia Professor Kaarin Anstey** is an ARC Laureate Fellow in the School of Psychology at the University of New South Wales (UNSW). She is also Director of the UNSW Ageing Futures Institute, and Co-Deputy Director of the ARC Centre of Excellence in Population Ageing as well as a conjoint Senior Principal Research Scientist at Neuroscience Research Australia. Anstey's research programs focus on cognitive resilience in ageing as well as the prevention of dementia. She has developed risk assessment tools and interventions for people at risk of dementia. A second focus of her work is on older driver safety and in this field Anstey has also developed and validated risk assessment tools and interventions. Anstey is a member of the World Dementia Council.



## Branch and Committee Reports

### Program Committee Report

The Society provides an active program of events through its Hunter, Southern Highlands, and Western NSW branches, and in Sydney. The full program for the year can be found in the [website event calendar](#).

With events held recently by the branches reported on separately in this Bulletin, this section focuses on recent events held in Sydney.



### Report on the 7 February 2024 OGM and Open Lecture

The Society's events program for 2024 was opened on 7 February following the 1319th OGM at the new venue of the Metcalfe Theatre in the Macquarie wing of the State Library. A number of recently appointed Fellows and Members were presented with their membership certificates. A large number of Fellows and Members, particularly those appointed over the COVID years, have not yet had the opportunity to receive their certificates and so, at future face-to-face meetings later in the year, we shall try to invite a subset to each subsequent OGM of the year, and look forward to meeting in person.

**Emeritus Professor Roy Green AM FRSN**, Special Innovation Advisor at the University of Technology Sydney, delivered an open lecture on the topic '[Productivity: what it is and why it matters](#)'. In an extremely lucid overview, Professor Green laid out the decreasing productivity of Australia, identifying a lack of innovation as a central factor. His global comparisons brought the message home quite sharply – we are sliding back into the 'Lucky Country' Donald Horne had warned us of last century. For members who missed this presentation, the lecture is now [available on YouTube](#).



### Report on the 21 February 2024 Annual Meeting of the Four Societies

Former Commodore, Royal Australian Navy, Vince di Pietro AM CSC FRSN FRAeS spoke to the Annual Meeting of the Four Societies on 21 February, hosted this year by RSNSW, again at the Metcalfe Auditorium. His topic was '[Resilience before Readiness — "... for the want of a horseshoe nail"](#)'. He ranged over disciplines and his own very varied experience, beginning with his leadership of the recovery from the 2019–20 fires and floods in the Shoalhaven. His message was that infrastructure in Australia, in particular in the regions, is not ready for crises. Communications networks are weak, if they exist at all, from roads through to mobile networks. When power goes down, we cannot buy petrol, or food. He generalised from this case to others — the defence forces, based as they are in regional Australia, would be impossible to mobilise if power and internet were interrupted, or if roads were cut. He called for renewable and distributed power networks and more broadly for a rethink of what resilience in Australia means. The presentation has been recently [posted to YouTube](#)

Christina Slade FRSN  
Chair, Program Committee

## Hunter Branch Report

### Presentation Report — 19 February 2024

#### Exploring the Holographic energy supply: so what's all the fuss about?

**Dr Martina Mrongovius**

#### Artist and Designer



The Hunter Branch held its first meeting and Public Lecture for 2024 on Monday 19 February at the Hunter Theatre in Broadmeadow, Newcastle. The Public Lecture was jointly hosted (co-badged) with the Newcastle Branch of the Australian Decorative and Fine Art Society (now ArtsNational Newcastle). This co-hosting arrangement was an opportunity for RSNSW members to engage with others in the Hunter who have an interest in furthering knowledge in the arts.



On this occasion, internationally recognised art professional, Dr Martina Mrongovius, who is the Lake Macquarie Council's 'Arts Producer - Lake Arts Precinct', presented a talk entitled "Exploring the Holographic". The audience of over 100 people was treated to an interesting and visually stimulating consideration of the use and application of holography by artists.

Dr Mrongovius described the use of lasers to create holographs and explained how lasers can be used to present an image of an object or scene as a holograph. She then explored the use of holographs by artists while taking the audience on a journey of her use and creation of holographs in her art practice. Dr Mrongovius showed how the use of lasers often only thought of as a technological and scientific tool could be used to create and present artistic images that allow the audience to view an object or scene from many different perspectives. Her presentation included colourful and dynamic holographic images presented at international exhibitions. Martina described some of the novel ways in which she engages and stimulates the viewer at her art installations to not only view the holographic object or scene from many perspectives but also to induce a dynamic viewing of the three-dimensional scene or object. The audience was treated to a talk that exemplified how technology and science can be used in the creation and practice of art.

The lecture was followed by an informal social gathering that facilitated RSNSW attendees and ADFAS members to share their experiences of the evening and more general interests.

The Hunter Branch Committee of the RSNSW wishes to thank the ADFAS (Newcastle) Committee for taking the lead in hosting this co-badged event.

Philip Bolton FRSN  
Secretary, Hunter Branch

## Southern Highlands Branch Report

Presentation Report— 15 February 2024

### Ten novels that changed the world

**Susannah Fullerton OAM FRSN**  
**Author, Literary Lecturer, and Your Leader**



This was a memorable lecture by Susannah Fullerton. It was the first event of 2024 for the Southern Highlands Branch, attracting an 80-person audience. Along with regular attendees of the RSNSW Southern Highlands Branch were many who had experienced literary tours with Susannah around the world, as well as members of local book clubs. Susannah was very warmly welcomed.



Susannah emphasised that her choice of novels was a very personal one, as their strengths lay in the power of storytelling and imagination which would obviously differ from one person to another. Her choices ran from *Don Quixote* right through to Harry Potter, as they were arranged in chronological order of publication. *Don Quixote* was first published in 1605. Most literary critics regard this as the world's first novel. It is the second most translated book in the world after the Bible and is estimated to have sold 500 million copies around the world. For someone who never existed except in the pages of a novel, *Don Quixote* has had an enormous impact. There is even an asteroid named after him.

Susannah continued to work her way through the centuries, describing in her fascinating way novels that she had chosen because they had changed the world. As she reached her tenth nomination, muttering could be heard from the audience as to what the tenth book would be. She had just finished a dissertation on the social issues raised in *To Kill a Mockingbird* when she announced that her tenth place had been filled by *Harry Potter*, a book that changed the world on publication. Instantly children, particularly boys, began to read for pleasure a “cool thing to do”.

In summary, Susannah pointed out that fiction brings change because it allows us to walk in the shoes of another person. In her opinion, it enables us to ‘try on’ other lives and see how they fit us.

An exciting and thought-provoking literary lecture.

Anne Wood FRSN  
Chair, Southern Highlands Branch

Presentation Report— 17 February 2024



On 17 Feb 2024, the RSNSW Southern Highlands Branch was invited to share a remarkable scientific event by the **Children's Cancer Institute (CCI)**.

Over wine and cheese, generously provided by the Southern Highlands Winery, Emeritus Professor Les White AM, the inaugural Chief Paediatrician for NSW, and Associate Professor Mark Cowley, an excellent speaker, computational biologist, and leader of the Computational Biology Group at the Children's Cancer Institute, presented their world-leading ZERO Program which is aimed at the 30% of children's cancer sufferers for whom all treatments were failing and death was imminent.

An audience of 100, many of whom represented the Southern Highlands RSNSW Branch, heard of the Children's Cancer Institute's world-leading approach to personalised genetic medicine that is helping "incurable" children. Results have been shared with hospitals around the world, and this approach, or variations of it, are now used by most of the major children's cancer organisations around the world. The Australian Government has funded the basic approach so that now all children presenting with cancer are genetically mapped so that their cancer type can be more accurately identified at an early stage.

The Southern Highlands was an excellent location for this special event. A young boy from Bowral, Josh Hammond has had his cancer successfully treated in this program. Associate Professor Mark Cowley also calls Bowral home. Many in the large audience were personally involved in this moving story of science in the Southern Highlands region.

Anne Wood FRSN  
Chair, Southern Highlands Branch

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## Western NSW Branch Report

### Event Report

In conjunction with the Western NSW Branch of the Royal Society of New South Wales, Charles Sturt University is conducting its Provocations Public Lecture series that showcases and



celebrates research at the University.

## Forthcoming Events

A program of six lectures in the Provocations series is planned for 2024. These will be live streamed and recorded for subsequent availability on the Society's YouTube channel.



The events are:

- [Parasites, Australia's silent threat - Coincidence, nature's hand, or policy complacency?](#), Professor Shokoofeh Shamsi, Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga Campus, Wednesday, 28 February 2024, 6.00–8.00 pm AEDT
- [Out of Africa-Arabia: how ancient human history gave us modern lifestyle diseases](#), Professor Alan Cooper, Charles Sturt University, Port Macquarie Campus, Wednesday, 10 April 2024, 4.00–5.00 pm AEST
- Topic: TBA, Professor Muhammad Shiddiky, Charles Sturt University, Orange Campus, Wednesday, 26 June 2024, 6.00–8.00 pm AEST
- Adapting to change — Invasive plants and pests take up the challenge, Professor Leslie Weston, Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga Campus, Wednesday, 28 August 2024, 6.00 – 8.00 pm AEDT
- Topic: TBA, Professor Sarah O'Shea, Charles Sturt University, Dubbo Campus, Wednesday, 23 October 2024, 6.00–8.00 pm AEST
- Rural and regional health, Professor Allen Ross, Charles Sturt University, Orange Campus, Wednesday, 5 November 2024, 6.00–8.00 pm AEDT

Nilima Mathai  
Treasurer, Western NSW Branch

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## The Society and Social Media

The Society's presence on social media platforms is growing strongly, particularly following the appointment of the Society's part-time Communications Officer. Our [Facebook page](#), [LinkedIn channel](#), [X/Twitter feed](#), and [YouTube channel](#) are engaging an increased following, and we continue to build our repository of events on YouTube. Our YouTube channel now has 820 subscribers, while the 144 videos online have received over 100,000 viewings.

The social media icons at the end of this newsletter will take the reader to our pages on these platforms, from where you can follow, subscribe, and be notified of new content.

*As a Society member, please consider subscribing to our social media channels to support the Society's outreach, and also please encourage your friends and colleagues to do so.*



## YouTube recordings of recent events

All online presentations and all face-to-face presentations held in Sydney and by the Western NSW Branch are recorded and uploaded to the Society's YouTube channel. These can be accessed directly from [YouTube](#) or from the [Presentations](#) page of the RSNSW website.

For convenience, the video links below provide access to recordings from the most recent three months. We hope that these will be of interest to members.



YouTube recording of the presentation at the 2024 Annual Meeting of the Four Societies (21 February 2024) on the subject of *Resilience before Readiness — "... for the want of a horseshoe nail"* by Vince Di Pietro AM CSC FRSN. A summary of the lecture and a brief biography of the presenter is available from the [online event notice](#).



YouTube recording of the presentation at the 1319th Ordinary General Meeting (7 February 2024) on the subject of *Productivity: what is it, and why it matters* by Emeritus

Professor Roy Green AM FRSN, University of Technology Sydney. A summary of the lecture and a brief biography of the presenter is available from the [online event notice](#).



YouTube recording of the presentation at the 1318th Ordinary General Meeting (29 November 2023) on the subject of *What do we really know about 20th- and 21st-century sea-level change?* by Emeritus Professor John Church AO FAA FTSE, UNSW Sydney Climate Change Research Centre — the winner of the 2022 RSNSW James Cook Medal. A summary of the session and a brief biography of the presenter is available from the [online event notice](#).



YouTube recording of the presentation at the Western NSW Branch Meeting 2023-4 (16 November 2023) on the subject of *Thirst for power — the rivers of conflict in Southeast Asia*, by Professor Lee Baumgartner, Executive Director of the Gulbali Institute for Agriculture, Water, and Environment at Charles Sturt University. A summary of the session and a brief biography of each of the presenters are available from the [online event notice](#).

# CAVES AS OBSERVATORIES OF GROUNDWATER RECHARGE

PROFESSOR ANDY BAKER

ROYAL  
SOCIETY  
NEW SOUTH WALES



YouTube recording of the presentation at the 1317th Ordinary General Meeting and 2022 Clarke Memorial Lecture (8 November 2023) on the subject of *Caves as observatories of groundwater recharge*, by Professor Andy Baker from the School of Biological, Earth, and Environmental Sciences of UNSW Sydney. A summary of the session and a brief biography of each of the presenters are available from the [online event notice](#).

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Edited by: [Lindsay Botten](#) FRSN, Webmaster, Royal Society of New South Wales

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