

Australian and New Zealand
FORENSIC SCIENCE SOCIETY



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NSW Branch Newsletter

October 2019

Join us for our end of year event featuring.....

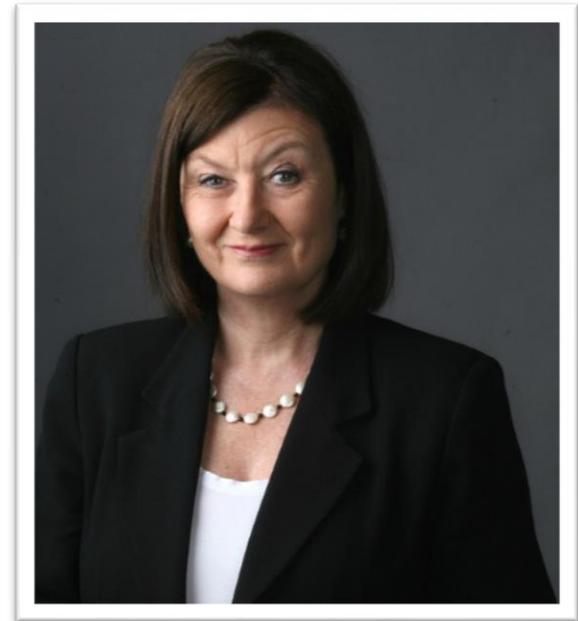
Investigative Journalist Kate McClymont

WHERE: Kirribilli Club
11 Harbourview Cres
Lavender Bay

WHEN: **14th November,**
from 6pm
Three course meal
with drinks

RSVP: 5th November

COST: \$95 Members
\$80 Student Members
\$110 Non-members

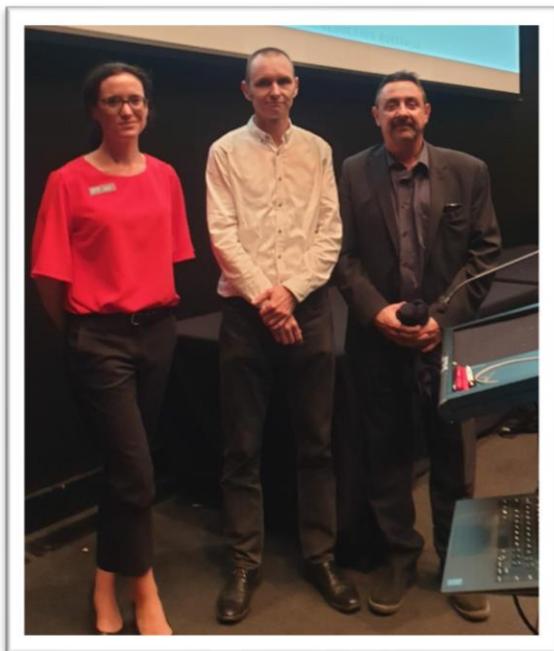


All proceeds go to future scholarships to provide career development opportunities for forensic practitioners and students.

Bookings essential at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/anzfss-nsw-branch-end-of-year-event-with-guest-speaker-kate-mcclymont-tickets-72026696789>

The Chemistry Behind Pill Testing – Gino Vumbaca & Associate Professor Malcolm McLeod

16th May 2019



ANZFSS NSW branch had the opportunity to host two speakers, Gino Vumbaca (President and Co-Founder of Harm Reduction Australia) and Associate Professor Malcolm McLeod from Pill Testing Australia, to speak to us about the chemistry behind pill testing. Gino Vumbaca was able to take our members through the scientific underpinnings of

in-field drug testing, the logistical and political minefields that he and his team navigated whilst designing and implementing Australia's first (and second) ever pill testing trial at the popular music festival "Groovin' the Moo" and the future directions and capabilities of this technology.

Associate Professor Malcolm McLeod stepped us through the experience of attending the 'Pill Testing' tent at the "Groovin' The Moo" festival in 2018, where he and his team held Australia's first ever festival drug testing. Our members learnt that festival goers would line up outside the tent, then be admitted one by one. A festival goer could expect to move through several stations inside the pill testing tent, where their drugs were examined, recorded, analysed and finally – discussed with the festival participant in a one on one informal counselling session.

This wholistic approach to harm reduction has proved to be successful at

identifying potentially lethal substances and provided festival goers with the opportunity to dispose safely of their drugs should they choose to.

The opportunity to gain insight into this important application of in-field chemistry was appreciated greatly by all attending the meeting, with many members engaging both Gino and Malcolm post presentation to speak at length about the ins and outs of the scientific process.



Field portable Gas Chromatography-Mass Spectroscopy (GCMS) instrument used for pill testing at Groovin' the Moo.

Podcasts, Police & Prosecution – Dave Murray, John Sutton, Judge Robert Sutherland SC, Dr Michael Kennedy & Lucy Cormack

Public Night 18th July 2019

For our public night this year, we hosted a panel discussion on the topic of true crime podcasts and their role in the modern day pursuit of justice. With an all star panel comprised of journalists, judges, police and prosecutors we heard a range of perspectives from key players in the criminal justice system on the positive and negative impacts of this insanely popular form of infotainment. Throughout the night, our moderator award winning journalist Lucy Cormack offered up many thought-provoking questions for our panellists to discuss.

Kicking off the presentations was Journalist Dave Murray who discussed the making of one of the first true crime podcasts in Australia - "Searching for Rachel Antonio". Dave explained how podcasts provide a platform to thoroughly cover a story in a way that isn't possible with the restrictions of print media. He also spoke about how podcasts can provide a voice for the families of victims, particularly those still looking for answers.

Dr Michael Kennedy, previously a detective with NSW Police and now an academic running the Bachelor of policing program at WSU, offered a philosophical argument examining the ethical considerations for Police and Journalists and how this links to the over-arching principal of 'rule of law'. Michael talked about the need for Police to strike a balance between withholding information critical to the integrity of an investigation, and transparency about investigative short-comings.

From the courtroom perspective, Barrister John Sutton and Judge Robert Sutherland both agreed that podcasts were, in

principal, no different to other forms of media coverage. They argued that the courts have always had to consider on a case-by-case basis the impact media coverage could have on procedural justice. Both John and Judge Sutherland cited the defendant's right to the presumption of innocence and the impartiality of the jury as key factors to be considered in any high profile criminal case.

Overall, it made for a fascinating and entertaining evening for attendees, especially with Judge Sutherland managing to weave in some courtroom theatrics with his canine companion!



Forensic Pathology: What the TV shows don't tell you – Dr Diane Little

AGM 4th September 2019



Dr Dianne Little is a Forensic Pathologist at the Forensic Medicine and Coroners Court Complex (FMCCC) in Lidcombe. Dr Little has over 30 years' experience working in Forensic Pathology and has worked both nationally and internationally throughout her distinguished career.

On 4 August 2019 the ANZFSS NSW branch was lucky enough to have Dr Little present to our members at the Western Sydney University Parramatta campus, where she covered a range of topics.

It was discussed how the CSI effect portrays Forensic Pathologists and that movies/TV shows such as 'Difficult Woman', 'Quincy', 'Silent Witness' and 'Bones' may be based on real people, however are not realistic. Dr Little then delved into the work a Forensic Pathologist really does and that they have specialist training in autopsy pathology and other related forensic sciences, in order to assist the Coroner in reporting cause of death and present evidence in court.

Dr Little mentioned there are only 56 Forensic Pathologists in Australia (15 of which are located in NSW and 10 of these are based at Lidcombe). In NSW it isn't common for the Pathologist to attend the crime scene these days, however when necessary they can assist with the investigation by observing the deceased within the environment, determine time of death (although not reliable), cause of death, identify any wounds or weapons used, as well as interpret general death indicators such as rigor mortis and lividity.

At the morgue the Forensic Pathologist's primary role is to abide by the 'Coroners Act 2009' and conduct an examination of

a deceased with the least amount of disturbance possible to determine cause of death. Sometimes this is simply done using radiology, other times it will need to involve a systematic dissection and analysis (both external and internal) of the body through autopsy. Dr Little discussed that there is always risk associated with this line of work and there are always minimum personal protective equipment (PPE) requirements to uphold for the safety of all workers at FMCCC.

Dr Little stressed that the autopsy is not the only work that a Forensic Pathologist undertakes and that as with every role, there is associated paperwork and administrative tasks required for every case that she completes. She has also had to travel overseas to conduct a specialist role as part of Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) incidents.

During a virtual tour of the FMCCC, Dr Little stated that there is capacity for roughly 300 bodies to be stored in the refrigerators. The building comprises of 12 tables in the main room, 2 homicide suites, an isolation suite, dissection area and rooms for other specialists to conduct their work.