



AUSTRALASIAN VIROLOGY SOCIETY

AVS NEWSLETTER

**Welcome to the first newsletter from the
Australasian Virology Society for 2023**

AVS11

The 11th Biennial meeting of the Australasian Virology Society was held at the JW Marriott hotel on the Gold Coast Queensland. The meeting was resounding success and we would like to thank the convenor, Professor Lara Herrero and the AVS11 committee for their exceptional work in organising an excellent event and Leishmans for providing professional services.

In attendance were a record 297 delegates, with 181 abstracts received for 21 sessions. Feedback was received from 56 delegates with 87% rating the program content and structure as very good-excellent and 83% rated session themes as very good-excellent. We thank you for providing feedback and will incorporate your comments and suggestions into the AVS12 program.



Photo (L-R): Brianna Jesaveluk, Gilda Tachedjian, Sarah Hess, Felicia Schlotthauer, Heidi Drummer, Andy Poubourios

AVS12

Preparations are underway for AVS12 with dates set for **December 2-5, 2024** at RACV Goldfields in Creswick, Victoria. Convenors Dr Johanna Fraser and A/Prof Greg Mosely are currently seeking nominations for potential International and National speakers for consideration. Speakers will be selected based on Gender balance, Diversity and Inclusion, balance of speakers across Australia and New Zealand.

Please email the convenors (johanna.fraser@monash.edu and greg.moseley@monash.edu) with the following information before 16th June:

- Proposed Speaker
 - Area of Research
 - Institute and region
 - Gender
 - Why is this person a good speaker for AVS 2024? (Recent findings, topicality, seen them speak recently etc.)
 - Recommended AVS member as contact
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AUSTRALIAN CDC

The AVS sought feedback from its members on the Australian CDC discussion paper “Role and functions of an Australian Centre for Disease Control”. This feedback was compiled along with the views of the committee of management and returned to the consultation group for inclusion in the final written responses to the discussion paper. The summary of the feedback received to the discussion paper can be found here <https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/Australian-CDC>. In the 2023 Federal Budget, the Government allocated 91.1 million AUD over the next two years to further develop the Australian CDC.

ASN EVENTS

ASN events is the new professional conference organizer for AVS. During 2022, the AVS committee of management undertook a review of its professional services to decide on which provider to engage for the 2023-2024 period. The review process included interviews with potential suitable providers and detailed proposals for both society management services and professional conference services for AVS12. AVS is pleased to announce that ASN events were selected to manage both our society and AVS12. This change in provider involved migrating our website, membership details and our general society information to ASN events and their associated platforms. We are currently updating our website.

NEW AVS LOGO

At AVS11, the society ran a competition for a new look logo. We received four entries and members were asked to vote for their preferred logo and the winner was announced during the AVS11 award ceremony. The winner was Lewis Mercer, University of New South Wales. We are currently updating our website

and collateral to include the new logo. Thank you to all entrants and to those who voted.

New logo below:



AVS POSITION STATEMENT ON GAIN OF FUNCTION STUDIES

AVS Secretary A/Professor Peter Speck led a position statement from the AVS in support of virology research and the current excellent regulatory framework for conducting studies in Australia and New Zealand. The letter was written to support a statement from Goodrum et al on “Virology under the microscope—a call for rational discourse”. (*J Virol* 97:e00089-23.) The AVS letter was published in three American Society for Microbiology journals and was co-authored by a large number of AVS members.

1. "Virology under the Microscope-a Call for Rational Discourse". mBio, e0081523
 2. "Virology under the Microscope-a Call for Rational Discourse". mSphere, e0016523
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3. Statement in Support of: "Virology under the Microscope-a Call for Rational Discourse". J Virol, e0045123
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RETIREMENT OF ROY HALL



Roy Hall recently retired as Professor of Virology from SCMB, UQ.

After completing a BSc (Hons) at UQ, Roy joined QIMR as a research associate and worked in Brian Kay's vector biology lab learning the basics of virology and entomology associated with arbovirus transmission. In 1985 he began his PhD with Graham Burgess at James Cook Townsville followed by a postdoc with John Mackenzie at UWA in Perth in 1989. During his PhD he developed his skill in the

In the decade before his retirement, Roy became interested in symbiotic viruses of mosquitoes, referred to as insect-specific viruses (ISVs). A fruitful sabbatical in Darwin kicked off this endeavour, resulting in the detection and isolation of a panel of novel ISVs that would dramatically reshape the research direction in his lab. Thanks to a dedicated group of staff and students, Roy's group isolated and characterised many new ISVs from mosquitoes in Australia and his lab became international leaders in the field. Indeed, their subsequent studies on

relatively new area of hybridoma technology to make monoclonal antibodies to viral proteins for use in a variety of diagnostic and research applications for mosquito-borne viral pathogens. This would remain a valuable core strength in Roy's group until his retirement. When Roy moved to UWA he took his tool bag of diagnostic reagents and used them to revamp key protocols in the arbovirus surveillance unit run between UWA and WA Health. While at UWA he also developed molecular virology skills and began developing recombinant viruses expressing flavivirus proteins as vaccines for the mosquito-borne pathogen Murray Valley encephalitis virus.

Roy's return to UQ in the mid to late 1990s as a Research Fellow, coincided with the first outbreak of Japanese encephalitis virus (JEV) on Australian soil and the expansion of West Nile virus (WNV) into the Americas, and his research efforts focused on developing novel assays for monitoring the spread of these viruses and providing more specific

host restriction factors using novel approaches to generate recombinant "chimeric" versions of these ISVs, in collaboration with his friend and colleague Alex Khromykh, led to the development of a safe and efficient platform for generating novel vaccines and diagnostics – now referred to as "ISVac". This new technology has been incorporated into diagnostic protocols at Qld Health and is currently being translated into commercial outcomes as vaccines and diagnostics for production animals such as pigs and crocodiles. A seamless transition of the leadership of Roy's group to a former PhD student and now Senior Researcher Fellow (Jody Peters), has allowed Roy to step away while the group continues to move ahead at full steam.

Roy has been a keen supporter of AVS meetings as a member of the organising committee, judging sessions and encouraging his staff and students to attend. Roy was inducted as a Fellow of the Australian Society of Microbiology for his contribution to the field and has been a mainstay on the

diagnostic tools – these reagents were frequently requested from local and overseas researchers and used by CDC in test kits they provide to researchers across the US to monitor the spread of WNV. They are now still used in many Australian research and diagnostic labs. More recently an online portal was established at UQ “Mozzy Mabs” to provide these reagents in a sustainable and affordable way. Roy’s experience and expertise with mosquito-borne viruses has also allowed him to work closely with Health Departments and primary industry by leading UQ’s response to local outbreaks of WNV in horses and crocodiles and more recently JEV in humans and pigs.

organising committee of the Arbovirus Research in Australia Symposia over the last 20 years as virology co-ordinator. Roy has mentored approximately 30 PhD students during his career – a real passion for him and usually the most satisfying part of his job.

Roy continues in an Emeritus position with UQ to help guide the ISVac technology into a commercial reality and to continue to advise and mentor PhD students and senior staff in the group.

The AVS would like to express their sincere gratitude for Roy’s contribution to Virology and wish him all the very best in retirement.

SAVE THE DATE

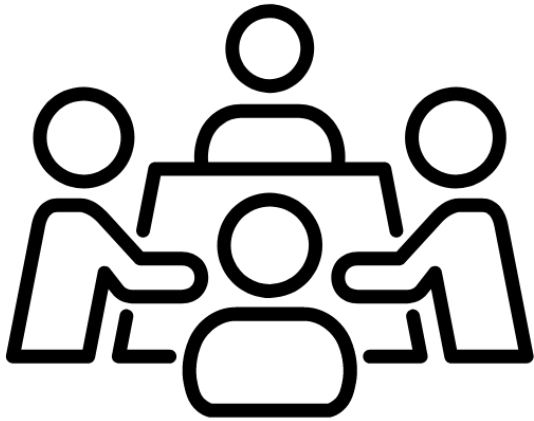
Annual General Meeting, Society Elections and Symposium.

12th December 2023.

Virtual meeting with local virology hubs.

Abstract submissions open on the *15th August* with a deadline of the *15th September*.

Further details to come.



UPCOMING EVENTS

[MicroSeq 2023, 6-7th September.](#)



AUSTRALIA DAY HONOURS

Dr Stephen Locarnini was recognised in the Australia Day honours for significant service to medicine as a virologist, and to medical research and awarded an AM. The AVS would like to congratulate Dr Locarnini and extend their appreciation of his contribution to Virology research.

The AVS would also like to congratulate **Lieutenant General John James Frewen** who received an AO “For distinguished service as Commander Defence COVID19 Task Force and Coordinator General of the National COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force.” His contribution to the Australian COVID-19 vaccine roll-out was instrumental to its success and Australia’s response to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic.

AVS JOURNAL PARTNERS



Submit to [*Journal of General Virology*](#) the journal at the forefront of virology research and home to the invaluable ICTV Virus Taxonomy Profiles. All ASV members can receive a 20% APC discount code using the membership portal.



Viruses greatly values its affiliation with the Australasian Virology Society. AVS members are entitled to a 15% discount on the article processing charges when publishing with Viruses.

Viruses (ISSN 1999-4915) is an open access journal that provides an advanced forum for studies of viruses. Our aim is to publish papers that are of significant impact to the virology community, and to help researchers present their cutting-edge findings and opinions in detail receiving quick dissemination among their peers. Viruses is covered by leading indexing services, including PubMed, Medline, the Science Citation Index Expanded (Web of Science), Scopus, and other relevant databases. Original articles, reviews, communications and conference reports are all welcome.

More Information [Here](#).
