



Society for  
**Reproductive  
Biology**

## April 2024 Edition

# HIGHLIGHTS

### PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Including an update on the World Congress of Biology on page 2

### SECRETARY REPORT

Meet this year's council members on page 4

### EXOTIC SPECIES LIAISON REPORT

Including upcoming events of interest, page 12

### AWARDS AND SPONSORSHIP REPORT

Celebrate the 2023 award winners, pages 13-16

### BRIAN SETCHELL VISITING LECTURE

Read the reports from recipients Mark Green and Kelly Walton, pages 24-27

See [upcoming conferences](#) of interest on pages 30-32

### Inside this issue

President Report

Secretary Report

POC Report

Fellows/Plenary Lecturer Report

Conference Secretary Report

RFD Liaison Report

Awards/Sponsorship Report

ECR Report

Student Report

Communications Report

Treasurer Report

Membership Report

Brian Setchell Visiting Lecture Reports

Vale Rex John Scaramuzzi

Meetings of Interest

SRB Council Members 2024



Dear SRB colleagues,

Welcome to 2024. I am delighted to have had the privilege of seeing many of you at our recent annual scientific meeting in Brisbane. I hope you all agree that it was an excellent meeting with an exceptional scientific program and an inclusive and collegiate environment. I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to everyone that contributed to the success of this meeting and make special mention of our Program Organising Committee Co-chairs, Tu'uhevaha Kaitu'u-Lino, Geoffry De Iuliis, and Dagmar Wilhelm and our Local Organising Committee representative, Lisa Atkinson, for all of their efforts.

A highlight of our annual meeting and one that I am particularly proud of is our support of our emerging researchers and the recognition of excellence in all its forms. SRB support includes: Financial travel support for attendance at the annual conference for students and ECRs, international exchange lecturers, collaborative awards, and a number of achievement-based awards. Such awards could not happen without the support of our generous sponsors and I would like to acknowledge and extend a very warm thank you to each of these sponsors. I would also like to acknowledge our Awards and Sponsorship Secretary Fiona Brownfoot for her tireless efforts in coordination of these awards and our many judges/chairs who had the difficult task of selecting our awardees.

Prior to the meeting, we had the honour of hosting the inaugural RV Short Medal ceremony and oration delivered by Professor Niamh Forde from the University of Leeds (UK). Niamh delivered an inspiring presentation focusing on her journey to becoming one of our field's most gifted and talented young researchers. This was followed by a moving tribute delivered by Professor Marilyn Renfree in commemoration of the career of her husband, the late Professor Roger Short. SRB is proud to co-sponsor this award together with our sister societies of the Society for the Study of Reproduction (USA) and the Society for Reproduction and Fertility (UK).



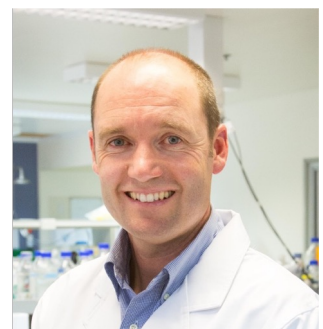
## ***World Congress of Reproductive Biology***

Ongoing discussions are being held with the Executive Board of SSR and SRF to promote the establishment of an international federation to promote the field of Reproductive Biology and to reinvigorate the World Congress of Reproductive Biology (WCRB) meetings. Currently, we are exploring the possibility of SRB, SSR and SRF co-hosting the 6<sup>th</sup> WCRB in 2027 as a satellite meeting of the annual SSR conference. The preferred location is the west coast of North America, with Vancouver (Canada) and San Diego (CA) under consideration as possible venues owing to the frequency and relative ease of direct international flights. I will likely continue to serve as the SRB representative on the Program Organising Committee for the 6<sup>th</sup> WCRB and will provide additional updates as our planning progresses.

## ***Financial sponsorship of inter/national meetings***

As a possible reflection of recent increased costs of international travel, I have been approached by the organisers of several international meetings requesting SRB to provide sponsorship. Unfortunately, due to our position as a relatively small society, we do not have a precedent for offering sponsorship for international meetings, and instead try to implement programs to ensure that our finances are used to directly support our members. I have met with our Executive to discuss this and agreed to raise it as an agenda item at our next Council meeting. One possibility that we have been considering is offering members subsidies for travel to support their attendance at important international forums. I would welcome any feedback on this, or alternative options to promote our members.

*Brett Nixon*





This year saw the position of President Elect up for election. We are very excited to welcome Professor Sarah Robertson as the Society's President Elect.

We also extend a very warm welcome to co-opted members Dr Kylie Dunning, returning to council to join our POC and Dr Jessica Rickard taking over the Exotic Species Liaison portfolio. On behalf of the Society, we extend a very warm welcome to you all and look forward to working with you over the coming years.

We also extend a huge congratulations to Dr Hon Yeung (Dexter) Chan who was elected to join Dr Brendan Houston as our ECR representatives as well as Tess Symington who was elected to join Bianca Fato as our Student Representatives.

We are also indebted to those whose terms on Council have come to an end. Members departing council this year are co-opted members Prof Tu'uhevaha Kaitu'u-Lino (POC Co-chair), Dr Kelsey Pool (EDI Secretary and Exotic Species Liaison), along with Dr Ella Green (ECR Rep) and Azelle Hawdon (Student Rep). We sincerely thank these people for their time and effort and everything they have contributed to the Council during their terms. Official handovers of these portfolios should be now underway. On behalf of the Society, we wish to thank each of you for your outstanding contributions to Council over the recent years.

## **2023 – 2024 Council**

### **EXECUTIVE MEMBERS**

<b>President</b>	*Brett Nixon
<b>President-Elect</b>	Sarah Robertson
<b>Secretary</b>	Cassy Spiller
<b>Treasurer</b>	*Kelly Walton





## ORDINARY MEMBERS

*Geoffry De Iuliis	POC co-chair
Dagmar Wilhelm	POC co-chair
Fiona Brownfoot	Awards and Sponsorship Secretary
Tessa Lord	Fellows & Life Members/ Plenary Lecturers
Secretary	
Janet Pitman	Communications Secretary
*Caitlin Wyrwoll	Conference Secretary / RFD Liaison
David Sharkey	Membership Secretary

## CO-OPTED MEMBERS

Kylie Dunning	POC co-chair
Jessica Rickard	Exotic Species
Katie Ayers	Newsletter Secretary
*Taylor Pini	Public Relations and Website Secretary
David Sharkey	Public Officer

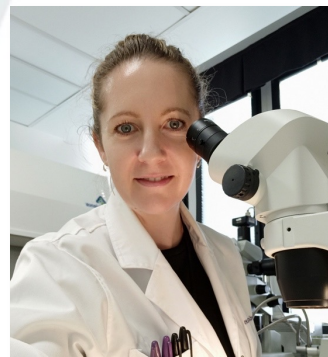
## STUDENT AND EARLY CAREER MEMBERS

*Brendan Houston	ECR Representative
Hon Yeung (Dexter) Chan	ECR Representative
*Bianca Fato	Student Representative
Tess Symington	Student Representative

\* Denotes final year on Council.

I was wonderful to see many of you in Brisbane last year for our annual meeting (and my apologies that Brisbane didn't bring out the sunshine for you!).

With kind regards,  
Cassy



*Cassy Spiller*



Thank you everyone for attending the ESA-SRB annual meeting in 2023. It was very well attended, and the SRB portions of the meeting were rated as very good or excellent (with the caveat that <30 SRB members completed the survey) – thank you!

We had wonderful plenary lectures with Prof Serge Nef (President's lecture), Prof Mark Hedger (Founder's Medal) and Prof Bu Yeap for the ESA-SRB joint plenary lecture. Another highlight was the "Inclusivity in Reproductive Health" including presentations from Ada Cheung (Trans Health Research Group, Department of Medicine, The University of Melbourne, Heidelberg, VIC, Australia), Ken Pang (Murdoch Children's Research Institute, Parkville, VIC, Australia) and Patrick Thomsen (The University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand).

We do acknowledge that the program was packed with Sunday being a full day and having the RV Short Medal Lecture on Saturday afternoon. We would like to provide opportunities for oral presentations to as many ECRs and MCRs as possible, while also prioritising awards sessions as standalone sessions.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our outgoing POC co-chair, Tu'uhevaha Kaitu'u-Lino, for her outstanding contributions of the past 3 years and welcome our newest member of the POC team, Kylie Dunning.

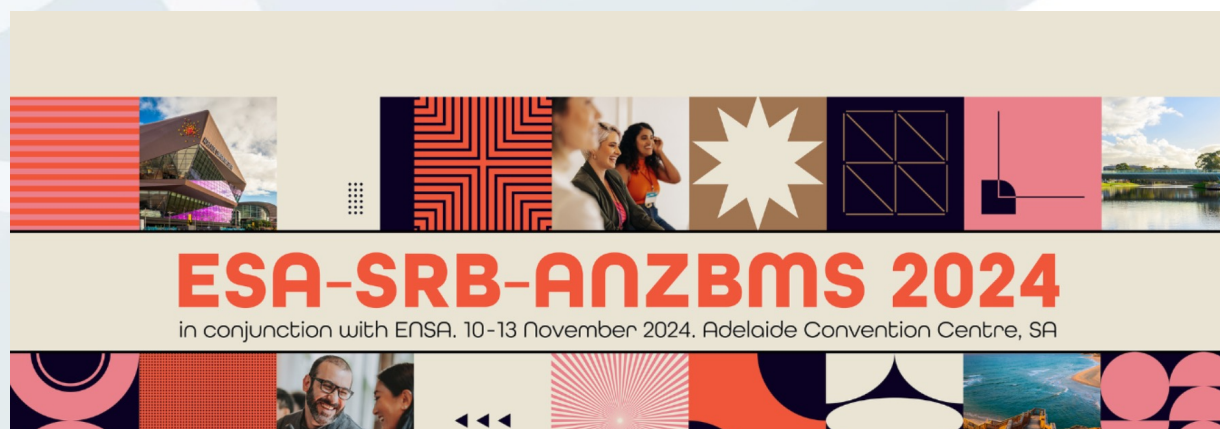


We are excited to have already started planning for SRB2024, which will be held in Adelaide Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> to Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2024. We are off to a great start having secured Prof Irina Larina (Baylor College of Medicine, USA) for the ESA/SRB/ANZBMS joint lecture, who will give a technology/imaging focused talk (optical coherence tomography - OCT). She will cover aspects of interest to both clinicians and fundamental scientists of all three societies. If you have any symposium and/or speaker suggestions, now is the time to get in touch and email us ([geoffry.deiuliis@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:geoffry.deiuliis@newcastle.edu.au) or [kylie.dunning@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:kylie.dunning@adelaide.edu.au) or [dagmar.wilhelm@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:dagmar.wilhelm@unimelb.edu.au)). Otherwise, we look forward to planning another exciting program for 2024 and cannot wait to see you all in Adelaide.



*POC: Geoff de Iuliis, Tu'uhevaha Kaitu'u-Lino, Dagmar Wilhelm, Kylie Dunning*

7







## **Plenary Lecturers Secretary**

We would like to extend our congratulations and thanks to our 2023 plenary lecturers for their engaging presentations. Thank you also to the members who nominated them, and council members for their assistance in the selection process.

## **Founders Medal and Oration**

In 2023, the Founders Medal was awarded to Professor Mark Hedger:

Mark Hedger is a Professor of Monash University and the current Head of the Laboratory for Endocrinology and Immunophysiology in the Centre for Reproductive Health at the Hudson Institute, having previously served as the Deputy Director. Professor Hedger has worked in the field of men's reproductive health since 1984. During this time, he has published a large body of highly influential research that has collectively transformed our understanding of male reproductive physiology, endocrinology and immunology.

## **Presidents Lecturer**

In 2023, the Presidents Lecturer was Professor Serge Nef:

Serge Nef is a Professor at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Geneva. He is also a member of the Swiss Center for Applied Human Toxicology (SCAHT). He is interested in the molecular mechanisms regulating gonadal differentiation and testicular function in mammals. His laboratory uses molecular, cellular and mouse functional genomics as well as human genetics to investigate the complex gene networks that regulate primary sex determination, testis development, and function.

## **Fellows & Life Members**

Congratulations to the recipients of these prestigious awards and thank you to SRB members and the council for their nominations and assistance in the selection process.





## **Fellows of the Society for Reproductive Biology**

In 2023, two members were awarded the status of Fellow: A/Prof Josephine Bowles and A/Prof Jo James:

Associate Professor Jo Bowles is a Teaching and Research academic within the School of Biomedical Sciences (SBMS), The University of Queensland (UQ). Her team aims to understand the signalling that is necessary to instruct naive mammalian germ cells to embark on either oogenesis or spermatogenesis. Amazingly, although somatic sex determination is all about whether we are XX or XY, germ cell sex determination relies on signals from somatic cells to germ cells. Key discoveries include 1) that retinoic acid and BMP, both produced in the fetal ovarian environment, instruct germ cells to embark on meiosis and therefore to commit to female development; 2) that testicular germ cell fate is determined, during fetal life, by FGF signalling which engages the Nodal/Cripto signalling pathway.

Associate Professor Jo James leads a research team at the University of Auckland that combines in vitro cell/tissue-based experiments, in vivo and ex vivo imaging, and computational modelling approaches to shed new insight on pathophysiological drivers of fetal growth restriction. The goal of this work is to use this knowledge to improve how we predict, detect, and treat this disorder to give growth restricted babies a better start to life. She teaches reproductive biology to both medical and science students, and is an advocate for the development of early career researchers.



## Life Members

In 2023, Life Membership was awarded to Professor Graeme Martin: Graeme Martin gained a BSc (Agriculture) at the University of WA (UWA) in 1975 and a PhD in 1981. Following placements in France and the UK, he returned to a joint position at CSIRO and UWA in 1986. He transferred fully to UWA in 1994 and became Professor (Chair) in 2001. Graeme's research covers basic and applied science, with a focus on how the brain mediates environmental influences on reproduction. He has published more than 370 journal papers, trained 43 PhD students, and received more than 50 invitations to present papers at international conferences. Graeme has earned national and international recognition: Fellow, Society for Reproductive Biology; Fellow, Australian Association of Animal Sciences; 2021 Marshall Medal, Society for Reproduction and Fertility (UK); Associate Member, Academie d'Agriculture de France. Although retired, he is emeritus professor and remains engaged with university activities and as Editor-in-chief of Reproduction, Fertility and Development.



*Tessa Lord*



# CONFERENCE SECRETARY / RFD LIAISON REPORT



Society for  
**Reproductive  
Biology**

It was fantastic to see so many of you at the booth this year. Bingo was as popular as ever and the tip box relay competition certainly revealed those who are old school lab skills limber. While most came in around the 4-5 minute mark, Dagmar Wilhelm set the pace on the first day with an impressive 3:17. Only to be outdone by David Simmons on the second day with 3:02. I am sure David is relishing his victory every time he looks at his chosen reproductive anatomy sticker (he rightly chose the placenta). Congratulations to all the winners and thanks to all the helpers.



We shared our booth with Rebecca Ciezarak and Graeme Martin from Reproduction, Fertility, and Development. RFD is an important supporter of SRB and we are grateful for their important role in SRB. Look out for a dedicated RFD issue for SRB “Rising Stars” in 2024.



*Caitlin Wyrwoll*



- Events coming up that are of interest:

- § Joint Congress for the Australian Association of Animal Science (AAAS) and the Asian-Australasian Association of Animal Production (AAAP): 8-12<sup>th</sup> July, Melbourne Convention Centre, 2024 <https://aaas.asn.au/aaas-conference-2024/>
- § 14<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference of Association of Applied Animal Andrology (AAAA), 3-5<sup>th</sup> July, 2024, Fortaleza, Brazil <https://animalandrology.wildapricot.org/>
- § 29th NAAB Technical Conference on Artificial Insemination and Reproduction, 18-20<sup>th</sup> Sept Madison, WI, USA <https://www.naab-css.org/>
- § European Society for Domestic Animal Reproduction (ESDAR), Belgrade, Serbia, 12-14 September, 2024 <https://www.esdar.org/>
- § International Congress on Animal Reproduction (ICAR), Japan, July 2026 <https://animalreproduction.org/>



*Jessica Rickard*





## **Congratulations to the Award Winners 2023**

A huge congratulations to all of our SRB finalists and award winners for 2023. In collaboration with our generous sponsors, we held the award sessions at our conference in Brisbane. We had a fabulous array of applicants showcase the best reproductive science. Presentations focused on gametes through to the placenta and pregnancy, really displaying the breadth and depth of science in our specialty.

All of our award finalists did a fabulous job in competitive sessions. The presentations were outstanding, and we would like to congratulate all finalists. In particular, we would like to congratulate the SRB award winners of 2023:

**Robinson Award for Excellence in Reproductive Biology Research**  
**Joint winner Associate Professor Joanne James, University of Auckland.**  
**and Professor Kirsty Pringle, University of Newcastle.**

Joanne is a research and teaching academic and co-leads the Pregnancy modelling Group. She is focused on understanding placental physiology using novel engineering techniques. She is also interested in the cellular relationships underpinning placental development and function, from stem cells to mature lineages.

Kirsty is a research and teaching academic and Assistant Dean of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion for the College of Health Medicine & Wellbeing. Her main research interests span from the role of the renin-angiotension system in placental development, ACE2 deficiency in placenta and its role in fetal growth restriction and improving outcomes for First Nations women and their children.

We congratulate the joint winners Joanne and Kirsty for joining a highly esteemed group of winners of the Robinson Award for Excellence in Reproductive Biology Research and their outstanding contribution to reproductive science.



## **Mercy Perinatal Mid-Career Women's Health Medal Professor Natalie Hannan, University of Melbourne**

Natalie is a ARC Fellow and heads the Therapeutics Discovery and Vascular Function Laboratory. Her work is focused on understanding serious pregnancy complications from preterm birth to preeclampsia. She is developing novel treatments for these conditions. Natalie joins an elite group of SRB researchers who have won this award. We sincerely congratulate her for her outstanding contribution to reproductive science.

## **Newcastle Reproduction Emerging Research Leader Award**

Dr Elena Tucker, *Murdoch Children's Research Institute*.

Elena's research focuses on the genetics of mitochondrial disease and infertility. Elena joins an elite group of SRB researchers who have received the Newcastle Award in recognition for their excellent work in reproductive biology. We congratulate her on this prestigious award.

## **The David Healy New Investigator Award**

Dr Ellen Jarred, Hudson Institute

Ellen won this award for her talk titled 'PRC2: a novel regulator of ovarian folliculogenesis'

This year all our finalists of the David Healy New Investigator award are receiving an award from Merck. Our finalists for the David Healy New Investigator Award included Lauren Alesi, Ellen Jarred, Fabrizio Horta, Annie Whitty, Ha Tran and Penny Whiley.

## **ANZPRA New Investigator Award**

Bianca Fato, University of Melbourne

Bianca won this award for her talk titled 'Vasoconstriction pathways are altered with insulin treatment in pregnancy: implications for understanding vascular dysfunction in gestational diabetes'







## **ART Lab Solutions Gamete and Embryo Award**

Jessica Mullhall, The University of Newcastle

Jessica won this award for her talk titled 'Immortalised mouse caput epididymal epithelial cells: a model to study how parental stress is remodelling the sperm epigenome'

## **Centre for Reproductive Health, Hudson Institute of Medical Research Award for best ECR and MCR poster**

Michaela Sacco won the ECR award for her poster titled 'Myosin Heavy Chain 10 downregulation within endometrial epithelial cells contributes to dysregulation in adhesion'

Sarah Moody won the MCR award for her poster titled 'RNA-seq to identify alpha activin and TGF $\beta$  target genes in Testicular Germ Cell Tumours'

## **SRB Male Contraceptive Initiative Abstract and Travel grant Award winners**

This was jointly awarded to Jessica Dunleavy and Brendan Houston and travel award winners were David Skerrett-Byrne and Jessica Mulhall.





## Awards Sponsorship and Judging

Without sponsorship and the generous support from the SRB community, awards would not be possible. SRB would like to thank all individuals who gave up their time to form judging committees and come to difficult decisions to arrive at a winner.

The SRB would also like to sincerely thank the following sponsors for their generous support of the SRB Awards in 2023

- The Robinson Research Institute
- Mercy Perinatal, Mercy Hospital for Women
- Newcastle Research Centre for Reproductive Science, Newcastle University
- The Richie Centre, Hudson Institute of Medical Research and the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Monash University
- Australia and New Zealand Placental Research Association (ANZPRA)
- ART Lab Solutions
- Male Contraceptive Initiative
- Merck



*Fiona Brownfoot*





## **SRB meeting**

We hope you all enjoyed the great science and the opportunity to catch up with your colleagues at SRB in Brisbane last year! As usual, ASN and the POC put together an amazing program – we had great sessions focusing on important areas of reproductive biology and networking opportunities. Thanks to everybody who attended and participated in the Meeting of the Minds event. Bingo certainly got the conversation going – we hope everyone made some new connections. Congratulations to all three winners of the raffle draw and we look forward to doing something similar in Adelaide this year.

## **Mentoring program**

Last year, we initiated an ECR Mentoring Program between senior SRB researchers and postdocs at Level A/B. The program is well underway, and we will provide a progress update in the next newsletter. Keep an eye out for an expression of interest call from us in the second half of 2024 if you want to be part of the program this year. Alternatively, reach out via email to let us know if you are interested in participating.

## **Goodbye to Ella**

The 2023 annual conference marked the end of Dr. Ella Green's term as the ECR Representative on the SRB Council. We would like to thank Ella for her service to the ECR community. Good luck in your Medical Science Liaison role, Ella, and we hope to see you at SRB again soon.

In the next few months, we will put out a call for the incoming ECR representative for 2025-2026 so all ECRs please look out for an email with this information.



## **SRB-RFD review**

The 2022 SRB ECR-RFD review has now been published – please check it out at <https://www.publish.csiro.au/RD/RD23213>

A team of 6 ECRs is currently writing the 2023 ECR-RFD review. Look out for an email regarding participating in writing the 2024 ECR-RFD review, later this year.

If you have any feedback or suggestion for this year's ECR networking event or other ECR support schemes, please let us know through email.

Until next time!

Brendan and Dexter

[brendan.houston@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:brendan.houston@unimelb.edu.au)

[honyeung.chan@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:honyeung.chan@adelaide.edu.au)



*Dexter Chan and Brendan Houston*



## Hi SRB students!

We hope you all enjoyed the amazing science at SRB 2023. Congratulations to all presenters, finalists, and award winners! It was wonderful to catch up in person and meet new student members in beautiful Brisbane!

## What's new?

- Introducing our newly elected student representative – Tess Symington! We are very excited to be working together over the next 12 months.
- A huge thank you to our outgoing student representative, Azelle Hawdon. Thank you for your dedication, work, and enthusiasm on council over the past two years'; it has been amazing to work with you!

## SRB 2024

- SRB Meeting will be held in Adelaide in November.
- A survey will be sent out to all student members requesting feedback on the format for the 2024 Student Meeting.
- The Student representative election process will be held online again; student members will be contacted via email for nominations.
- SRB PhD Student-ECR Mentoring program begun during the SRB Meeting 2023. If you would like to be involved in this in 2024, please email one of the student representatives.

As always, if you have any suggestions on how we can improve our student meeting and functions, please contact us!

Your student reps,  
Bianca & Tess

### Contact:

[bfato@student.unimelb.edu.au](mailto:bfato@student.unimelb.edu.au)

[Tess.Symington@uon.edu.au](mailto:Tess.Symington@uon.edu.au)



*Bianca Fato*



*Tess Symington*





**SRB X (Formerly)Twitter update.** We now have over 4300 followers! All SRB member publications, grant successes, job/PhD opportunities and awards are being showcased on X, as well as, interesting hot-off-the-press reproductive focused articles highlighted in Nature Briefing, New Scientist Daily, the New York Times and The Times (UK) etc.

Please remember to tag @ReproductionSRB in your tweets to increase our reach. Twitter Impressions are the metric that measures the numbers of times a tweet has been viewed by Twitter users. Over the past 12 months, Twitter Impressions during the 2023 SRB conference were >31K. Top tweet was a conference tweet with over 7300 impressions.



**SRB @ReproductionSRB**

Congrats to all the SRB winners tonight....including the David Healy Award winner Ellen Jarred, ART Awardee Jess Mulhall, Emerging Research Leader Elena Tucker 🙌🙌🙌🙌 @ReproductionSRB  
[pic.twitter.com/1TeQci39zS](https://pic.twitter.com/1TeQci39zS)

Remember to let us know if you have a new paper that has just been published, particularly if it is in SRB's affiliated journal *Reproduction, Fertility and Development*, please email [janet.pitman@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:janet.pitman@vuw.ac.nz).





## FUTURE NEWSLETTERS

To all SRB members,

We would like to continue to include the following sections in upcoming newsletters.

1. New publications by SRB members
2. Conferences that might be of interest to SRB members
3. Interviews with members of the SRB community

We need your help for these sections.

So please get in contact if you have a new publication or know of an interesting conference. Or if you would like to volunteer yourself or nominate another for an interview.

You are also very welcome to email if you want to write an article or have any other ideas for the newsletter.

[katie.ayers@mcri.edu.au](mailto:katie.ayers@mcri.edu.au)



*Taylor Pini, Janet Pitman, Katie Ayers*



We are pleased to report that the society remains in a healthy financial position as at Q1 2024 with a net increase of 7%. Net gains are attributed to steady increases in our MLC investment account, a reasonable conference redistribution from the 2023 ASM in Brisbane, and memberships. The society is extremely grateful for the ongoing financial support from its members – THANK YOU 😊.

## **Speaker costs associated with the AGM**

SRB council has revised our invited speaker offerings for the 2024 ASM in favour in providing more support to our dedicated members. To accommodate this, there will be reduction in the amount offered to invited non-members. This is in alignment with what many international societies are now doing in response to marked increases in international travel.

For the 2024 ASM, SRB (and ESA) invited symposium speakers will be offered a Welcome Function & Conference Dinner Ticket (if they wish to attend) OR Free day registration + Conference Dinner Ticket (if they wish to attend).

## **Keynote/Plenary Speaker entitlements will remain the same.**

Note: SRB council is aware that this may impact the ability of some inter/national speakers to attend the meetings and will consider travel subsidies as requested/appropriate.

## **Travel/Career support funds for our SRB members**

In 2022 we were thrilled to be able to award 6x Project Seed Grants to support our talented ECRs. This scheme did not run in the 2023 round owing to less conference redistribution from the ASM in Christchurch, New Zealand.

The 2023 ASM in Brisbane generated significant conference redistribution income, allowing us to consider running a 2024 round of travel/career support awards.

Details of these awards are being finalised but will support the travel/career incentives for our early-mid career researchers. Watch this space!

*Kelly Walton*





**ECR Collaborative Research Travel Award**

The aim of this award is to encourage collaboration between Early Career Researchers (ECRs), who are members of the Society for the purpose of planning joint research and/or the conduct of preliminary experiments, or to allow the training of an ECR by another (for example, in an experimental technique). This award intends to encourage the retention of early career scientists in reproductive biology and rewards loyalty to the Society. Following the assessment of applications by a panel of senior and early career members of the SRB, we are delighted to announce Dr Hon Yeung (Dexter) Chan (University of Adelaide; travelling ECR) and Dr Brendan Houston (University of Melbourne; host ECR) as the successful awardees of the ECR Collaborative Research Travel Grant in this current round. The award will allow Dexter to receive training in complex assessment of male fertility, and conversely, support Brendan in receiving training in the collection of seminal vesicle secretions for shared future studies. We look forward to Dexter and Brendan sharing the outcomes of their collaborative work, next SRB Newsletter. For those unsuccessful on this occasion, we strongly encourage you to apply again in the 2024 round, with applications to open in late August.

**Brian Setchell Visiting Lecturer Award**

The aim of this award is to enable the recipient to attend and present at an Australasian or international conference (to an academic or public audience, but preferably both). In addition to conference attendance, the recipient may utilise the awarded funds to visit institutions and research colleagues to establish or affirm collaborative research opportunities. For Round 2 of 2024, for eligible travel that will occur between 1<sup>st</sup> July and 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024, applications will open in the coming week, with completed applications due by Friday 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024. We strongly encourage all eligible members to consider applying.

**Breakdown of financial members as of March 2024**

Type of membership	
Life	32
Regular	110
Professional	0
Retired	5
Student	68
Overseas (excl NZ)	4
SSR affiliate	4
	223



David Sharkey





## Brian Setchell Visiting Lecturer Award Report 2023: A/Prof Mark Green

I am very grateful to the Society and honoured to be the 2023 Brian Setchell Visiting Lecturer Award recipient. This provided support for me to attend the 39<sup>th</sup> Annual European Society of Human Reproduction and Embryology (ESHRE) conference in Copenhagen, Denmark (25<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> June). In addition, to travel to the University of Nottingham UK to give an invited seminar and discuss collaborative research opportunities.



It was my first time at ESHRE and with more than 12,000 delegates, it was definitely one of the biggest conferences I have ever attended. Despite the large number of attendees, it wasn't long before I spotted lots of familiar SRB faces. Between us, we managed to divide and conquer the numerous parallel sessions to get the most out of the conference. Not to mention maximize the trade stand interactions, as well as the precision timing required to fight for the limited number of conference lunches! There were many excellent talks, including those from SRB members, that covered small RNAs and vesicles in embryonic development, the importance of endometrial synchronicity for ET, new AI and microfluidic technologies, as well as the obligatory time-lapse studies. The vast array of electronic posters also provided a wealth of knowledge. While attending the conference, we also squeezed in a few hours to explore the wonderful, yet windy, Copenhagen, with its historic sights and beautiful canals.

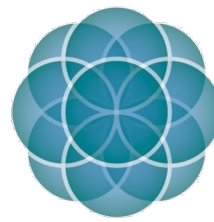


From Denmark, I travelled to Sutton Bonington campus of the University of Nottingham, where I had undertaken my undergraduate degree and PhD studies, just a 'few years' before! My visit and invited seminar enabled me to meet with Dr Kathryn Woad, Prof Richard Lea (President of SRF), Prof Kevin Sinclair, Prof Ramiro Alberio and Prof Gary England, to facilitate new research collaborations in studying the effects of endocrine disrupting chemicals, as well as methods to optimise the efficiency of bovine cloning. The visit also included surviving the PTSD of seeing my old lab bench- of which few if any equipment had been moved in the 20 years since I left it!! The day spent back on campus was very productive and certainly gave me insight into future research collaborations, as well as some of the issues facing researchers following Brexit and their ability to access funding.

Overall, my time in Denmark and the UK were excellent and I would like to again thank the Society. I really appreciate your support that allowed all this to be possible!!







## Brian Setchell Visiting Lecturer Award Report 2023: Dr Kelly Walton

I was thrilled to receive the 2023 Brian Setchell Visiting Lecturer Award funds to support my visit to McGill University (Montreal) and attendance at the 56th Annual SSR meeting in Ottawa, July 11-14th. During this trip, I spent time with Professor Daniel Bernard's team at McGill University to discuss our collaborative inhibin reproductive biology projects. I had a workshop meeting with Dan's team where I learned more about their fascinating projects examining pituitary-ovary crosstalk in reproduction. I also delivered a seminar titled "Inhibins and activins in reproduction and cancer cachexia" to the Department of Pharmacology and Therapeutics at McGill University. Whilst at McGill, I also established a new research collaboration with Professor Rima Slims in the Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, and we are now investigating novel inhibin gene variants associated with disrupted fertility.



(Kelly pictured here whilst our seeing the sights of Montreal with Professor Bernard)



Following my visit to McGill University, I attended the 56th Annual SSR meeting in Ottawa. This was my first time at this incredible international meeting for reproductive biology and it did not disappoint! I presented a poster at the meeting titled “Loss of inhibin function leads to subfertility and polycystic ovaries”. In short, this poster described how loss of inhibin activity in female mice leads to elevated serum FSH, enhanced ovulations, but also pregnancy failure. Ongoing collaborative works with Professor Bernard’s team hope to unveil how changes in maternal endocrinology contribute to this reproductive failure in absence of inhibin activity. I also presented new evidence from my team demonstrating that persistent loss of inhibin activity leads to the development of multi-cystic ovaries. Notable presentations from the meeting were by Phillippe Goddin (Prof David Pepin’s) laboratory, on the use of AMH agonists as vectored contraceptives in cats, and Prof Francesca Duncan’s team on targeting proprotein convertases in the ovary to identify new contraceptive candidates. Also, exciting data presented from Professor Martin Matzuk’s laboratory using innovative approaches to study transforming growth factor signalling in the reproductive tract.

Overall, an incredibly inspiring and productive trip – many thanks to SRB for this amazing opportunity!

*Kelly Walton*



## Rex John Scaramuzzi (1944-2023)

Rex was born in Ryde (NSW) to Italian immigrants, but nevertheless grew up with a love of cricket and rugby. His father was an orchardist, so he also developed an interest in agriculture that he was able to foster at Sydney University from which he gained a BSc (Agric) in 1965. He followed this in 1969 with a PhD on the hormonal regulation of mating behaviour in the sheep, under the supervision of the legendary Terry J Robinson and a very young David Lindsay.



With the help of a Ford Foundation Post-Doctoral Scholarship, he went on to a postdoctoral position at the Worcester Foundation for Experimental Biology in Massachusetts, and then became a Post-Graduate Research Anatomist in the UCLA School of Medicine in California. At that point, he was convinced by the late David T Baird to become a Scientific Officer in the MRC Unit of Reproductive Biology and Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology (University of Edinburgh). He held this position from 1972 until 1975, after which he was attracted back to Sydney to join CSIRO, where he stayed for 18 years. During that period, he served as Secretary (1980-1982) and then Chair (1991-1993) of SRB (ASRB).

In 1993, he took up the position of Professor of Veterinary Physiology in the Royal Veterinary College, University of London. In 2007, he won a highly competitive Marie Curie Fellowship that allowed him to work in the L'Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique in Nouzilly, France. In 2010, he retired and continued to live in France, although he held Adjunct Professorships at the University of London and the University of Western Australia, and served as an Associate Editor of Reproduction, Fertility and Development (2017-2020).

He was a productive scientist and published more than 300 research publications, including 35 invited review papers and chapters in books, and more than 200 refereed papers in international journals. He also held 4 patents and provisional patents. He was an Honorary Life Member of The Endocrine Society (USA), The Society for Endocrinology (UK), The Society for Reproduction and Fertility (UK) and The Society for Reproductive Biology (Australia).

In 2018, he was awarded the Marshall Medal, an honour bestowed to one person per year from around the world by the UK's Society for Reproduction and Fertility.

Among his important contributions was the initiation of two regular international meetings, the biggest being the Ruminant Reproduction Symposium, a major symposium that focuses on sheep, cattle and goats. The first was held in 1980 in the Blue Mountains, west of Sydney. Since then, this meeting has been held every 4 years or so, most recently in Ireland.

The second meeting is a smaller and more intimate workshop that focusses purely on the ovarian follicle of cows and sheep. Only a dozen or so people are invited and, over a few days, they are given the task of forming a consensus of the state of knowledge of a tissue that is central to farm animal productivity. These meetings have been far less frequent – the first was held in Terrigal (New South Wales) in 1992, the second in France in 2008, and the third in New Zealand in 2020.

For that New Zealand meeting, Rex was not well enough to travel half-way around the world but he sent a video so the group could see his passion for the topic and the workshop. There have been only three meetings in 30-odd years, but each one produced a major consensus paper, all published in *Reproduction, Fertility and Development*, that offered a foundation for research and, I am sure, university courses. The papers can be found at DOIs: 10.1071/RD9930459; 10.1071/RD09161; 10.1071/RD21086. The list of authors tells the tale of this field over 30 years.

Both of these meetings will go on in perpetuity and therefore form a major part of Rex's legacy. As will his 27 postgraduate students ... those he supervised in Australia, the UK and France ... who went on to forge important careers of their own.

For me personally, Rex has been a mentor, collaborator, and very close friend of nearly 50 years. He was a co-author on my very first presentation, as a PhD student, at SRB (then ASRB) in 1978 at Sydney University. In fact, he chaired that session, on Friday after lunch. I followed TJ Robinson. I still remember the first question I was asked ... a booming voice from the gloom at the back of the room, that began with "Seamark, Adelaide ...". The rest of the session is a blur!

Rex and I have shared science adventures, holidays, restaurants, wine, cheese, fast cars, and countless dinners with friends and family. I miss him deeply.

Graeme Martin





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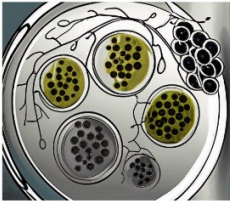
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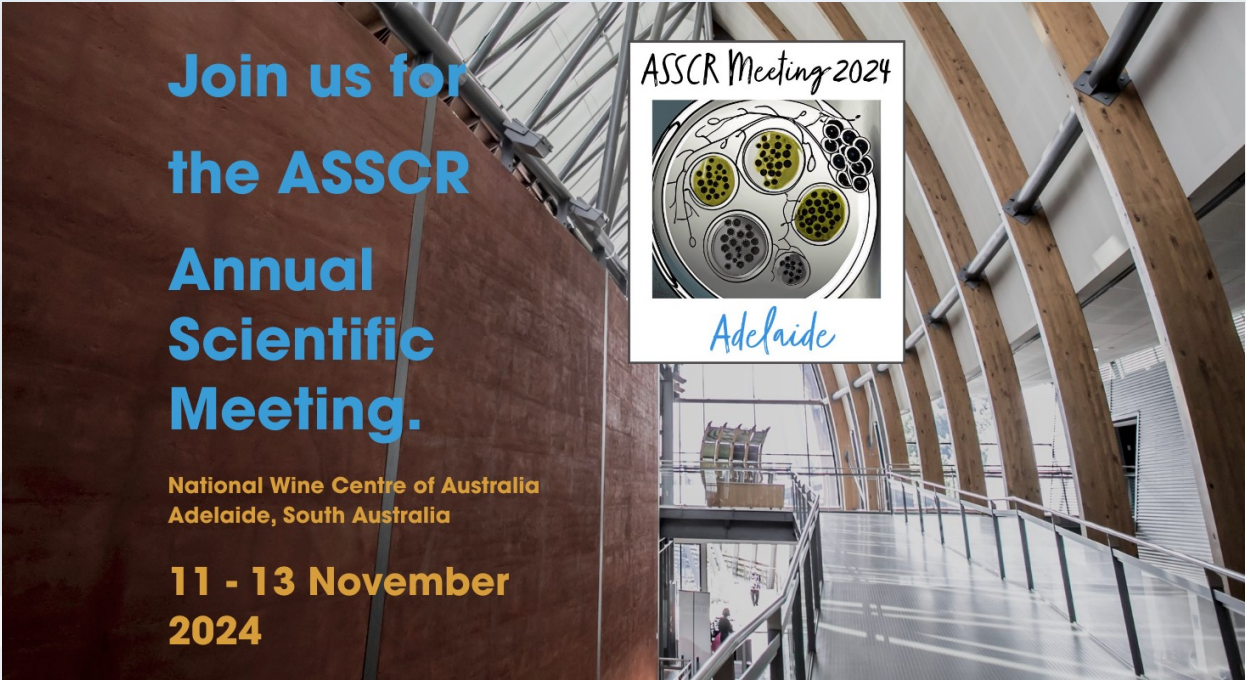
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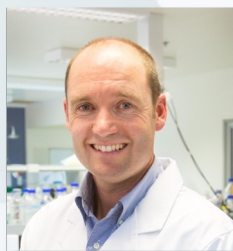
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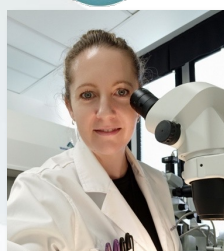




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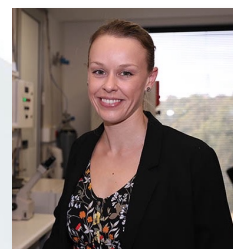
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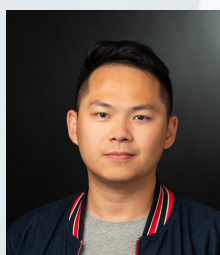
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