



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Season's greetings to you all!

In February's newsletter, outgoing President Professor Jane Ussher introduced me as the President Elect. Following our recent AGM, I am now stepping up. Jane will remain on the Board to offer her wise counsel as needed.

I would like to offer my sincere thanks to Jane, who has both led and served ASPOG with enthusiasm and commitment. During her presidency, Jane increased the Board membership and oversaw the revision of the website. Under her leadership through the pandemic, ASPOG continued to foster awareness of the psychological, socio-cultural and ethical issues relevant to obstetrics, gynaecology and reproductive medicine, through a series of very well-attended webinars.

Thanks to Jane's warm, sensitive approach and strong encouragement, the ASPOG conference is seen as a safe and supportive place for junior researchers, which also benefits conference attendees by offering early access to new research findings. We are now making plans for our annual conference in August 2022. The theme is 'Embracing Diversity', focusing on psychosocial aspects of reproductive and sexual health of women and gender diverse people. I encourage all of you to join us in Adelaide for this special event.

For those who are ready to travel overseas again, our parent organisation, ISPOG, has recently announced the new dates for the 20th ISPOG congress as 13-16 July 2022. The conference venue is the Sigmund Freud University in Vienna, and the new deadline for abstract submission will be 30 March 2022.

The pandemic has had a profound effect on us all, but I would like to acknowledge how hard it has been for the clinicians managing patients throughout this time. I hope that everyone is able to take some time away to rest and recuperate.

All the best for 2022.

Professor Meredith Temple-Smith  
Department of General Practice  
The University of Melbourne

## December 2021

## ASPOG News & Updates

Like many other societies, we have had to adapt our usual program of events and swapped out the annual 2021 conference for a series of webinars. We hope that you have been able to attend some of them (details about how to view past webinars are on page 2).

### Upcoming webinar:

#### Reproductive Coercion.

Date: 1pm February 8th, 2022.

Speakers: Dr Angela Taft, La Trobe University and Dr Laura Tarzia, University of Melbourne.

#### ASPOG conference in Adelaide 2022.

Theme: 'Embracing Diversity'

We are hoping that in 2022, we can meet in person for the ASPOG conference in Adelaide.

Tentative dates to mark in your calendar: **Fri 12 - Sun 14 August 2022.**

### For more information:

Visit our website: [www.aspog.org.au](http://www.aspog.org.au)

Email us: [admin@aspog.org.au](mailto:admin@aspog.org.au)

## In the spotlight:

### Flesh after Fifty: Changing images of older women in art.



Flesh after Fifty was an art exhibit that ran from 7 March – 11 April 2021, Abbotsford Convent, Melbourne.

<https://www.fleshafterfifty.com/>

Review by **Marita Long**

One of the things I was really looking forward to when I moved to Melbourne was getting to art galleries, museums, theatres and the various other cultural events a big city has to offer. Of course, my timing wasn't great with COVID-19 radically changing our day-to-day lives. It was especially lovely to make my way down to the Abbotsford Convent on a beautiful sunny autumn day (during a brief break in restrictions) to attend the "Flesh after Fifty" art exhibition and feel that we were back to a more normal way of living.

I was really drawn to the exhibition for several reasons, both personal and professional. As a GP, I work with many women across all ages and stages and am aware of the enormous pressure women are under - especially the feeling that they need to be a certain size or shape to feel desirable. I also see many post-menopausal women who struggle with the changes to their sense of self, particularly their bodies, as they enter into a post reproductive phase. This period, which in some cultures is one of celebration, can be a very dark and challenging time for many of the women I see.

On a more personal note I have never had a positive relationship with my body which, has on many occasions, limited my ability to participate in various activities. I have however recently become a grandmother and have surprised myself with a genuine willingness to don my bathers and take my grandchild for swimming lessons with much less worry about the cellulite on my thighs and bulges of my belly. So, I was very curious to view this exhibition and to explore this concept of "Flesh after Fifty".

Martha Hickey, the project initiator and the director of the Women's Gynaecology Research Centre at the Royal Women's Hospital wrote about the exhibition: "Older women are in need of the opportunity to celebrate their ageing bodies and young women are in desperate need of positive images of older women to alleviate the fear and misgivings about healthy ageing." And it certainly was a wonderful celebration. The various artists exhibiting through various mediums including photography, video, sculpture, painting and prints to promote positive images of women over the age of 50.

I really enjoyed all of the exhibits, but the Ponch Hawkes 500 Strong collection of black and white images of naked women over the age of fifty of all shapes and sizes was just wonderful. It was so inspiring and refreshing to see so many positive images of real women. As she says in relation to ageing: "your body is a product of your genes and your health and injuries – and all these things affect what happens in your life as well, and I wanted to show that." And she did.

There was also an incredible sculpture of a naked woman leaning back slightly on a ledge, resting her bottom and arms on the ledge with her legs crossed. She was glancing down to the ground with her eyes and had her mouth closed. She was not smiling, she looked deep in thought not sad but not happy either. For some reason she felt very familiar to me and I was drawn to go back several times to look at her - I am unsure why. Did she remind me of patient? Did she have a maternal vibe? Could this be how I see myself as getting older? She was really comforting but also a bit unsettling. I can still see her in my mind. She was beautiful in so many ways with all her bumps and wrinkles.

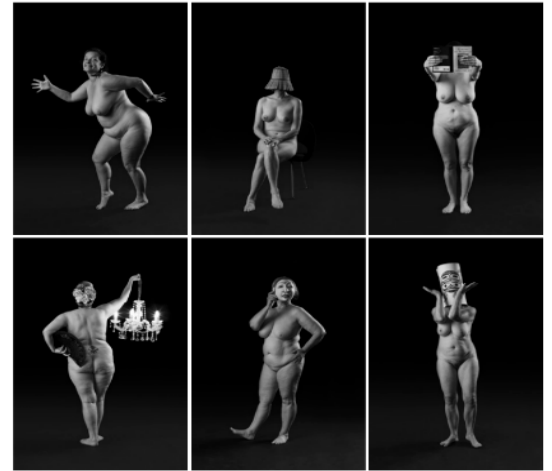
I also really enjoyed the individual sketches and advice for longevity from the various centenarians that were posted along one wall.

So, thanks to all of those involved in putting the exhibition together- I really wish I could have gone back for another look.



Australian Society for  
Psychosocial Obstetrics  
& Gynaecology

#### 500 Strong Ponch Hawkes



Ponch Hawkes, 500 Strong 2019-20 (detail)  
digital prints on cotton rag paper  
Courtesy of the artist.



### ASPOG 2021 WEBINAR SERIES

#### Update on cervical screening

2<sup>nd</sup> December 2021

Our most recent webinar had Dr Deborah Bateson from Family Planning NSW and Dr Amy Moton from SHINE share the 'game changing' new guidelines to self-collection for HPV screening.

#### Exploring trans sexual and reproductive health care

9th September 2021

Dr Damien Riggs and Dr Ruth McNair discussed their experiences and research in trans/ non-binary people. The presentations were fabulous and asked us to carefully consider the heterosexist language and practices that are often used.

#### Labiaplasty – Mind the Gap

16th June 2021

Dr Gemma Sharp, Dr Jennifer Hayes and Dr Ea Mulligan gave fascinating talks about body image and 'normal' anatomy.

#### Clinical Case Study Grand Rounds

10th November 2020

Five speakers - Lauren Hofmann, Lucy Holden, Wei-Guo Nicholas Loh, Michelle Van and Tom Wright – presented case studies across the psychosocial obstetrics and gynaecology spectrum.

**Members can watch (or re-watch) any of these sessions on the ASPOG website:**

<https://aspog.org.au/webinars-2021>





## MEMBER NEWS & ACHIEVEMENTS

### Postdoctoral Research Fellowship and Excellence Award

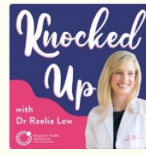
Dr Mariana Sousa was successful in securing the position of 2022 UTS Chancellor's Postdoctoral Research Fellow. UTS Chancellor's Postdoctoral Research Fellowships (CPDRF) are awarded to outstanding early-career researchers who wish to develop their research. "My project will deliver a competency-based education and training framework [CAXCare], to support health care professionals to make timely diagnosis and provide best-practice cancer cachexia care in Australia," Dr Sousa says.

Dr Sousa's "Grinnin' Up Mums & Bubs" project team won the South Western Sydney Local Health District Quality Awards category of Excellence in Aboriginal Healthcare Award. This category is for projects aiming to improve quality of care and service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients. This work is being led by Dr Sousa's PhD student Ariana Kong, and aims to provide a culturally appropriate intervention for equitable oral health outcomes for Aboriginal pregnant women and their children. *Congrats Mariana!*

### NHMRC and ARC DECRA

Dr Alex Hawkey has been awarded an ARC DECRA and an NHMRC Emerging Leadership Grant investigating fertility management among CALD women in Australia. As she cannot hold both awards simultaneously, she has chosen to accept the NHMRC grant.

### A podcast on "The Egg Freezing Decision Making Process"



Dr Michelle Peate was invited to speak on the "Knocked Up" podcast about the psychosocial impact of elective egg-freezing and the decision-making process. You can listen to it here:

<https://t.co/8d5wFqXLpb>



## RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

**Do you have frozen eggs in storage? Or have you had eggs in storage that you've had to make decisions about?**

### ELECTIVE EGG FREEZERS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH

Are you currently deciding whether to donate or discard your surplus frozen eggs?

or

Have you donated or discarded your surplus frozen eggs in the last 10 years?

We understand this decision is complicated. We want to hear from you so we can better support you and other women faced with the same decision.

Melbourne University researchers want to talk to you about your experience. The goal is to better support women who are going through this in the future. For more information and to participate in their survey visit:

### Have you had an Anti-Müllerian Hormone (AMH) test?



As more women choose to start their families later in life, they may be interested in understanding their future fertility. This research will explore how Anti-Müllerian Hormone testing results are shared with women, how this impacts women's wellbeing, and how it may influence their choices and behaviours around family planning. For more information and to participate in their survey visit: [go.unimelb.edu.au/x6di](http://go.unimelb.edu.au/x6di)

### Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) men's experiences of perinatal death

Looking for participants:

- Healthcare professionals who have experience in perinatal care;
- CALD men who have experienced perinatal loss;
- CALD Community Leaders with some experience in working with this group of men following perinatal death.

Details in the flyer: <https://bit.ly/3FiQ9gP>



### Are you a health professional that provides clinical care to patients with fertility issues?

Consider taking part in this study that is investigating health professionals' role in decision-making about the transfer of mosaic embryos. This study aims to understand the role of health professionals in decision-making about the transfer of mosaic embryos by investigating their clinical practice, self-rate competencies, attitudes and views. You may contribute valuable information that may help to understand patient's decision-making. The link of survey is: <https://t.co/aCLCFJSqMM>

### PhD scholarship opportunity

For a project to improve management of menopausal symptoms in cancer survivors. More info: [go.unimelb.edu.au/h6yi](http://go.unimelb.edu.au/h6yi)



## WHATS NEW IN...

### ADOLESCENT HEALTH

#### Menstrual health literacy among young women

An Australian study found self-management of dysmenorrhoea, is common, but a significant minority of young women are under dosing or choosing ineffective methods. Most women do not seek medical advice even when symptoms are severe, and cannot identify symptoms suggestive of secondary dysmenorrhoea. This highlights that improved education on menstruation is vital.

**Related papers:** Armour, M, et al. *Menstrual health literacy and management strategies in young women in Australia: A national online survey of young women aged 13-25 Years*. Journal of Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology 2021, 34(2), 135-143. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpag.2020.11.007>

### FERTILITY

#### Elective egg freezing

The number of women electively freezing eggs is growing exponentially. Many of these women will need to make a disposition decision. Amongst women with eggs on ice, 54% would be willing to donate to research and 12% would discard them. Considering the large demand for donor eggs, the authors also looked for the psychosocial determinants of egg donation. Only two studies were identified. Facilitators included a family member or friend in need, to help others create a family, financial gain, to further science, and control or input over the selection of recipients. Barriers included fear of having a biological child they do not know or who is raised by someone they know. The importance of this paper was highlighted in an editorial that described the paper as: "...a major contribution... provides meaningful information & future direction..."

**Related papers:** Caughey L, et al. *Disposition intentions of elective egg freezers towards their surplus frozen oocytes: a systematic review and meta-analysis*. Fertility and Sterility 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fertnstert.2021.07.1195>

Hershberger PE. *The state of the science on women's disposition decisions about electively frozen surplus eggs*. Fertility and Sterility 2021. [https://www.fertstert.org/article/S0015-0282\(21\)02124-5/fulltext](https://www.fertstert.org/article/S0015-0282(21)02124-5/fulltext)

#### Add-ons in IVF

Reporting on findings from a nationwide survey of <1500 Australian women who have accessed IVF authors found high use of add-ons (despite little evidence for efficacy). Although there is little or no evidence for add-ons working, 82% have used one, 72% pay extra for it, and 66% regret it.

**Related paper:** Lensen S...**Peate M**, Hickey M et al.. How common is add-on use and how do patients decide whether to use them? A national survey of IVF patients. Human Reproduction 2021; 36(7):1854-61. <https://doi.org/10.1093/humrep/deab098>

### MENSTRUAL HEALTH

#### Critical menstruation studies

This open access handbook, the first of its kind, provides a comprehensive, multidisciplinary and genre-spanning view of Critical Menstruation Studies. It creatively exams the cultural, psychological, political and social aspects of menstruation.

Link: <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-981-15-0614-7>

#### New systematic review in high income countries

Most reviews of menstrual health focus on low-middle income countries. This review synthesises 104 studies detailing menstrual experiences across sixteen high-income countries.

Barrington, D. J. et al. *Experiences of menstruation in high income countries: A systematic review, qualitative evidence synthesis and comparison to low-and middle-income countries*. Plos one, 2021, 16(7), e0255001, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0255001>

### PREGNANCY, BIRTH & MOTHERHOOD

#### Cancer during pregnancy

Women diagnosed with cancer during pregnancy (gestational cancer) are a small but vulnerable population. Women's experiences are better when care is well-coordinated and adjusted to meet needs/challenges and care is perceived to go beyond their immediate medical needs.

**Related papers:** Stafford L, et al. *Isolation experienced by women with gestational cancer: could peer support and tailored information be the answer?* Supportive Care in Cancer 2021. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00520-021-06396-2>

Stafford L, et al. *Cancer during pregnancy: A qualitative study of healthcare experiences of Australian women*. European Journal of Cancer Care 2021; 30(4):e1342. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/ecc.13425>

**Other papers of interest:** Bellhouse, C., Komiti, A., **Temple-Smith, M.**, **Bilardi, J.**, & Newman, L. (2021). *A psychological group intervention for high-risk pregnant women: a protocol of a feasibility and acceptability study of the STAR Mums program*. Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02646838.2021.1880001>

Bellhouse, C., Newman, L., **Bilardi, J. E.**, & **Temple-Smith, M.** *A systematic narrative review of psychological interventions available in the antenatal period to prepare parents for parenting*. Current Psychology, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-021-02138-z>

**Whitburn, L. Y.**, & Jones, L. E. *Looking for meaning in labour pain: Are current pain measurement tools adequate?* Pain Medicine, 2020, 22(5), 1023-1028. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pm/pnaa380>



## CANCER & PREVENTION

### Smoking cessation in cancer

The Clinical Oncology Society of Australia (COSA) has put out a position statement on smoking cessation in cancer patients. It outlines a brief advice model that can be used to support patients to quit smoking 1. Find the statement: [bit.ly/3atoMIU](https://bit.ly/3atoMIU)

### Oncofertility

New clinical guidelines for oncofertility care of children, adolescents and young adults with cancer. Three guidelines were published to address:

- Communication and ethical issues
- Fertility preservation for females
- Fertility preservation for males

**Related papers:** Mulder RL, et al. *Recommendations for communication and ethical issues related to fertility preservation in children, adolescents and young adult cancer patients: a report from the PanCareLIFE consortium in collaboration with the International Late Effects of Childhood Cancer Guideline Harmonization Group.* Lancet Oncology 2021; 22(2): e68–80. <https://bit.ly/30wCRmw>

Mulder RL, et al. *Recommendations for fertility preservation for female childhood, adolescent and young adult cancer patients: a report from the PanCareLIFE consortium in collaboration with the International Late Effects of Childhood Cancer Guideline Harmonization Group.* Lancet Oncology 2021; 22(2):E45-56 <https://bit.ly/3wVOQJZ>

Mulder RL, et al. *Recommendations for fertility preservation for male childhood, adolescent and young adult cancer patients: a report from the PanCareLIFE consortium in collaboration with the International Late Effects of Childhood Cancer Guideline Harmonization Group.* Lancet Oncology 2021; 22(2):E57-67 <https://bit.ly/3kOLawx>

## ENDOMETRIOSIS

### Cannabis for pain relief

Many women with endometriosis struggle with finding adequate pain management. Recent research suggests that cannabis may be an effective intervention for pain and a potential substitution to opioid usage. Respondents reported improvements in pain (81%), sleep (79%), and nausea or vomiting (61%).

**Related papers:** Armour, M. et al. *Illicit cannabis usage as a management strategy in New Zealand women with endometriosis: An online survey.* Journal of Women's Health, 2021, 30(10), 1485-1492. <https://doi.org/10.1089/jwh.2020.8668>

## SEXUAL HEALTH

### HPV screening

A benefit of primary HPV screening is that a woman could collect her own sample with a vaginal swab. A Victorian qualitative study has found very high levels of acceptance of self-collection among screening participants and GPs. The sensitivity of the HPV test appears to be similar for practitioner- or self-collected samples. Self-collection may provide a means to increase screening rates and further push towards the elimination of cervical cancer in Australia.

**Related papers:** Canfell K, et al. *Self-collection for HPV screening: a game changer in the elimination of cervical cancer.* Medical Journal of Australia 2021; 215 (8): 347-348. <https://bit.ly/323tiYd>

Creagh NS, et al. *Self-collection cervical screening in the renewed National Cervical Screening Program: a qualitative study.* Med J Aust 2021; 215: 354–358. <https://bit.ly/3ouNz0s>

Arbyn M, et al; *Collaboration on Self-Sampling and HPV Testing. Detecting cervical precancer and reaching underscreened women by using HPV testing on self samples: updated meta-analyses.* BMJ 2018; 363: k4823. <https://bit.ly/3wW15Oh>

Smith MA, et al. *Could HPV testing on self-collected samples be routinely used in an organized cervical screening program? A modeled analysis.* Cancer Epidemiol Biomarkers Prev 2021; 30: 268–77. <https://bit.ly/3ciqnNd>

Medical Services Advisory Committee. MSAC application no. 1664 (public summary document). Apr 2021. <https://bit.ly/3DoQn5n>

**Other papers of interest:** Htaik K, Fairley CK, **Bilardi JE**, Chow E, Ong J, Chen MY. *Evaluation of the online partner messaging service for sexually transmitted infections Let Them Know.* 2021, 49(1). [https://journals.lww.com/stdjournal/Fulltext/2022/01000/Evaluation\\_of\\_the\\_Online\\_Partner\\_Messaging\\_Service.4.aspx](https://journals.lww.com/stdjournal/Fulltext/2022/01000/Evaluation_of_the_Online_Partner_Messaging_Service.4.aspx)

Aung, E. T., Fairley, C. K., Ong, J. J., **Bilardi, J. E.**...et al. *Exploring the attitudes of men who have sex with men on anal self-examination for early detection of primary anorectal syphilis: a qualitative study.* BMC Infectious Diseases, 2021, 21(1), 982. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12879-021-06686-4>

## MENOPAUSE

### Menopause after cancer

Three in four Australian breast cancer survivors experience menopause after cancer. Hot flushes, night sweats and sleep disturbance are the most common symptoms, experienced by 89%. Over a third report that their menopausal symptoms affected the ability to “get on with life”. Less than a third were offered treatment for their symptoms, which was mostly ineffective. Most (60%) women wanted more support for symptom management.

**Related papers:** Peate M, et al. *Who is managing menopausal symptoms, sexual problems, mood and sleep disturbance after breast cancer and is it working? Findings from a large community-based survey of breast cancer survivors.* Breast Cancer Research and Treatment 2021; 187(2):427-435. <https://bit.ly/3HxuUcV>



## RESOURCES

### Gender diversity

- A blueprint for improving the health & wellbeing of the trans & gender diverse community in NSW. <https://bit.ly/3wZAT5K>
- WithRespect provides resources, tips and advice for LGBTIQ+ people on having and maintaining healthy relationships. We also provide support for LGBTIQ+ people of all ages and their families experiencing difficulty in their relationships, including family violence. [withrespect.org.au](http://withrespect.org.au)



### Normal anatomy and women's experiences

- The Vulva Gallery <https://bit.ly/3HxNxxT>
- 100 Vaginas documentary (available at SBS on Demand)
- The Cliteracy Project <https://bit.ly/3Dsi39r>
- Sex-Ed+ <https://bit.ly/3qLBMxo>

### General health

The Womens Health Education Network (WHEN) is working to empower and educate women to live and age well through exercise and movement. The website has new education articles by health professionals providing evidence-based information. Check it out: [when.org.au](http://when.org.au)

### Sexual Health

- The Centre for Excellence in Rural Sexual Health has designed, developed, and produced 12 FREE online modules focussed on the practical aspects of Sexual Health Care especially for rural practitioners but equally relevant for city dwellers. All modules are RACGP and ACCRM accredited. <https://t.co/t7SEBV3zup>
- A report on improving the safety of women and girls on public transport <https://t.co/HvYFyRBaIF>
- MCWH has recently released the 'Sexual and Reproductive Health Data Report 2021' <https://www.mcwh.com.au/wp-content/uploads/SRH-Report-2021-for-web-accessible.pdf>

### Fertility

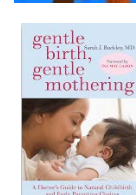
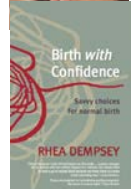
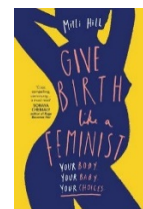
Some GPs are reluctant to ask patients about their pregnancy plans unprompted but research shows many patients would appreciate it. The Your Fertility website (<https://www.yourfertility.org.au/>) not only provides information for patients, but also offers a range of resources to help GPs have this conversation effectively and efficiently (<https://bit.ly/2Z0cwlS>).

### Pregnancy

- Online course (approx 14 hrs) - Point of Care Early Pregnancy Ultrasound: a joint, online education initiative between the Mobile Learning Unit, Melbourne Medical School and Mercy Perinatal, Mercy Hospital for Women. <https://t.co/bMRxiQAP5W>
- Family Planning Victoria and Multicultural Centre for Women's Health has developed new videos about pregnancy across 17 different languages. <https://www.mcwh.com.au>

### Childbirth

- "Give Birth Like a Feminist" by Milli Hill (ISBN: 9780008313104)
- "Birth without Fear" by Susanna Heli (ISBN: 9781913568245)
- "How to have a baby" by Natalie Meddings (ISBN: 1527207366)
- "Birth with Confidence" by Rhea Dempsey (ISBN: 9781483568300)
- "Hypnobirthing: practical ways to make your birth better" by Siobhan Miller (ISBN: 9780349419381)
- "Humanising Childbirth" [ed.gr/dk9kh](http://ed.gr/dk9kh)
- "Gentle birth, gentle mothering" by Sarah Buckley (ISBN: 9781587613227).



## CONFERENCES & MEETINGS

### Children by Choice

Brisbane 4-5 August 2022

Theme: Towards Universal Access

<https://www.childrenbychoice.org.au/forprofessionals/2022->

### Australasian Sexual Health Conference

Sunshine Coast, Australia 29 August - 1 September 2022

<https://www.ashm.org.au/Conferences/conferences-we-organise/australasian-sexual-health-conference/>



**Pandemic World**

Woman  
Family  
Society

20th Congress of the International Society of Psychosomatic  
Obstetrics and Gynaecology (ISPOG)

Vienna, 9-12 March 2022

**Save the  
Date**

 **ISPOG**  
International Society of Psychosomatic  
Obstetrics and Gynaecology

[www.ispog2022.org](http://www.ispog2022.org)



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And Twitter: @ASPOGau



## NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

We invite contributions from our membership. If you have read or seen something that you think others would be interested in or have a recent publication you would like to share with the ASPOG community please submit to <https://aspog.org.au/newsletter-content-submission>