

CASE STUDY



- Event:** 53rd Annual Scientific Meeting of the Australian and New Zealand Society of Nephrology
- Host:** Australian & New Zealand Society of Nephrology
- Date:** 2-6 September 2017
- Attendance:** 400+ delegates from 9 countries
- Organiser:** Conference Design Pty Ltd

Event Overview

The Australian & New Zealand Society of Nephrology (ANZSN) aims to promote and support the study of the kidney and urinary tract in health and disease and to ensure the highest professional standards for the practice of nephrology in Australia and New Zealand.

The Annual Scientific Meeting (ASM) is hosted by ANZSN. Attendees in Darwin included professionals from a range of fields including nephrologists, senior scientists, trainees in nephrology, scientists undertaking higher degrees and allied health professionals, nursing professionals, dietitians, under and post graduate students and research assistants.

A number of attendees were from the Northern Territory, highlighting the importance and relevance of this specialisation to the NT health community. The ASM was last held in Darwin in 2001.

As is customary, Update Courses were staged at the Darwin Convention Centre in the days leading up to the ASM, with more following the conclusion of the official program. In addition, the Australian and New Zealand Society of Interventional Nephrology meeting followed and was staged from 6-8 September at the Oaks Elan hotel in the Darwin CBD.

A range of expert speakers at the ASM talked about the very latest advances in nephrological science and clinical care, with keynote speakers including internationally-renowned specialists from the USA and Canada.

Why Darwin and the NT?

Rates of chronic and end-stage kidney disease in the Northern Territory are the highest in the world, with the problem almost exclusively among Indigenous Territorians. Hosting the Annual Scientific Meeting of the Australian and New Zealand Society of Nephrology in Darwin was particularly important to enable a light to be shone on this problem and seek to find potential solutions.

Conference Theme

The conference theme was “Equity and Diversity. A wide range of topics were covered at the conference and included developmental biology, experimental immunology, kidney injury, health services research, paediatrics, dialysis and transplantation.

The attraction of this event to Darwin was a joint effort by both the NT Convention Bureau and the Darwin Convention Centre, with initial contact dating back to 2013. Professor Alan Cass, Director of the Menzies School of Health in Darwin, was one of the driving forces behind the conference coming to Darwin. Professor Cass is a leading kidney specialist with particular interests in Indigenous health, chronic disease and research translation.

Professor Cass was a founding member of the NT Business Events Ambassador Program which seeks to maximise the extensive contact networks and marketplace intelligence of some of the NT’s leading business and industry professionals, in order to attract conferences to the NT.

Conference Triumphs

An Indigenous Patients’ Voices Symposium was held in Darwin at the same time as the ASM, a first for a kidney disease conference in Australasia. A report was subsequently sent to Federal Government politicians and bureaucrats seeking to change Government policy and attract increased support for remote Indigenous Australians with kidney disease.

The conference had an “Indigenous-owned business first” procurement philosophy which led to new business opportunities for at least one conference supplier, Paperbark Woman, which has now been asked to provide products for a large International Society of Nephrology Meeting taking place in Australia in 2019.

The Execution

Concurrent sessions were held in the convention centre’s Waterfront Meeting Rooms, highlighting the centre’s flexibility and capacity. The conference incorporated an exhibition which occupied

Halls Two and Three at the convention centre, with more than 20 exhibitors participating, including local Indigenous groups and not-for-profit organisations.

Social program activities

The social programme was specifically designed to provide a range of iconic Darwin experiences.

Participants in the pre-meeting Nephrology and Transplantation Update Course enjoyed dinner at Darwin's landmark attraction, Crocosaurus Cove. Located in the heart of the CBD, the visit enabled up-close viewing of Australia's fearsome saltwater crocodile at feeding time. Also home to the world's largest display of Australian reptiles, roving animal handlers at the venue provided an opportunity for delegates to interact with a selection of unique NT fauna.

For participants in the post-ASM Update courses, an optional dinner was held at the Darwin Sailing Club, an iconic location in Darwin which has been in operation since 1963. The club's waterfront multi-award winning restaurant overlooks stunning Fannie Bay.

An invitation-only President's Dinner was held on the Sunday evening prior to the official commencement of the ANZSN meeting. It was held at the award-winning Char Restaurant, which is located in heritage-listed Admiralty House, overlooking extensive parkland and Darwin Harbour. The restaurant is renowned for its beef, seafood and other Top End cuisine specialties.

On the Monday evening, a Welcome Cocktail Reception was held in the conference exhibition area at the Darwin Convention Centre from 5.30pm to 7.00pm. It was designed as a networking opportunity for delegates, with a highlight being animal handlers from Wild Thingz Animal Trainers & Encounters mingling with delegates and displaying some of the NT's more exotic creatures.

Guests then took a leisurely five minute stroll to the nearby Deckchair Cinema for a 'Night at the Movies', with the evening prefaced by a magnificent Top End sunset. Operated by the Darwin Film Society, this iconic outdoor cinema is located in a stunning tropical garden setting on the edge of Darwin Harbour.

The ASM Sunset Gala Dinner was held al fresco under the stars on the Darwin Convention Centre Forecourt and included a three course meal with drinks and entertainment.

Special local NT touches

450 custom-made tote bags featuring Indigenous art were provided for all delegates as a useful carry-all satchel and unique NT take-home memento. Made by Indigenous-owned Paperbark Woman, a Darwin-based supplier which specialises in fabrics designed and hand-printed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, the bags were a big hit with the delegates.

The Darwin Convention Centre

Organiser feed-back indicated that the Darwin Convention Centre provided an excellent boutique-style convention centre venue for the conference. Special mention was made of the waterfront views, the centre's food and beverage, convenient rooms, facilities and staff, with the centre's event coordinators and banquet staff singled out as being especially helpful. Darwin's wonderful September weather was also mentioned as a highlight of the event.

Pre and post conference touring

A special ANZSN Conference link to the Tourism Top End Visitor Information Centre was provided on the conference website to enable delegates wishing to undertake additional touring in the NT to review options and make direct bookings.

Legacy

Organisers indicated that the great climate and relaxed ambiance of Darwin greatly contributed to the success of the conference. The local organising committee also commented on the relevance of the conference for Darwin and the NT, highlighting some of the significant outcomes and legacies.

“We ran a conjoint Indigenous Patients’ Voices Symposium with the conference, the first ever for a kidney disease conference in Australasia. As well as empowering patients from across northern and central Australia, this has led to a powerful written and video report being shared with relevant politicians and bureaucrats in Canberra, in order to change government policy to support the provision of more services for very remote dwelling Indigenous Australians with kidney disease. All future annual meetings of the Society will have a similar Patients’ Voices meeting.”

Dr Paul Lawton
Co-convenor, ANZSN ASM 2017
Nephrologist & Senior Research Fellow
Menzies School of Health Research, Darwin, NT

The Verdict

“We had a wonderful experience organising and delivering the 53rd Australian and New Zealand Society of Nephrology ASM at the Darwin Convention Centre in September 2017. The staff onsite were knowledgeable and responsive and always had a smile for us and our clients. The venue is laid out beautifully with loads of natural light and taking full advantage of the waterfront position which was a great pleasure when you are stuck indoors for a week. We are more than happy to bring more events back and in fact have one booked for 2018 already!”

Anna Patterson
Senior Conference Manager
Conference Design Pty Ltd