

## ASM TriState meeting, 8–10 September 2023

Janessa Pickering and Justin Morgan (WA, meeting chairs)

For more than 30 years, TriState scientific meetings have been held to bring ASM to the ‘Top End’ of Australia, providing local and travelling colleagues opportunities to network and discuss microbiology matters that are particularly relevant to northern, central and remote Australia. The 2023 instalment was held at the Novotel CBD in Darwin, Northern Territory, in early September.

Organisers from the Western Australian ASM Branch welcomed 47 delegates from across Australia under the theme ‘Technology in the Top End to Advance Health’. Research presentations of the highest calibre were delivered in an informal and relaxed setting and covered an array of topics spanning point-of-care technology, sexual health, outbreaks, tools for AMR, vaccination, microbiology in the community, tropical infections and virology. The atmosphere and smaller group size greatly facilitated networking opportunities, especially over welcome drinks held in the Novotel CBD foyer and at the conference dinner held at the PepperBerry restaurant.

In a timely address, Keynote speaker Prof. James Ward spoke of the effectiveness of health programs controlled by Aboriginal peoples in sexual health but also the extremely successful activities to prevent COVID-19 transmission in remote communities during the early pandemic. Prof. Ward reminded us that there is still health inequity in our Indigenous populations and solutions needed to be integrated, tailored to the setting and have major coordination. He also provided strong evidence for why a Voice in parliament is important for Indigenous people. Assoc. Prof. Kalinda Griffiths complemented this messaging with an overview of data sovereignty, de-colonising practice, big data and epidemiological studies – all big concepts relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants in research and in health systems. Kalinda highlighted the structures and frameworks in development which emphasised signs of transformative changes to come.

Delegates were delighted to hear from Nevio Sarmento, and the trials and tribulations of developing modern laboratory capacity in Timor-Leste (pictured with colleagues in Fig. 1). Nevio highlighted several ways he and his team applied innovative thinking in difficult circumstances to achieve laboratory diagnostics. We were particularly impressed with stories of team member contributions to blood agar – actions that go above and beyond! It also highlighted what we often take for granted in microbiology in Australia routine and regular



**Fig. 1.** From left to right: Ms Tessa Oakley, Mr Nevio Sarmento, Ms Carolina Maia and Ms Eurosia Cham working in the fully functional diagnostic laboratory in Timor-Leste.

supply of laboratory reagents. Additional researchers from the Menzies School of Health Research presented, including Prof. Heidi Smith Vaughan and Porsche Cahill. Together they showcased the pop up ‘HealthLAB’ laboratory and associated health promotion activities in remote Northern Territory communities, encompassing 10 years of co-design, education and community involvement.

We were fortunate to co-host the meeting with partners, the National Reference Laboratory (NRL). Wayne Dimech and Joe Vincini represented the NRL and ran a state-of-the-art Quality Assurance Workshop to round up a productive and cohesive meeting. The next TriState is earmarked for 2025–26, and we pass the organising baton back to Northern Territory and South Australia branch committees. Thank you to all supporters and sponsors of this meeting. To read more about the meeting, find the full program and profile of speakers online: <https://www.asmwabranh.com/events>.