



## Christmas Newsletter 2020

From the Director's desk,

As 2020 rapidly draws to a close, we can reflect on what a year it has been. And unfortunately life will not be returning to any semblance of what we call 'normal' for some time to come. Many parts of the world are still experiencing second and third waves and our Australian State and Territory borders have again been closed.

Although a number of virologists and epidemiologists have been predicting a viral pandemic for a number of years, I don't think that most of us could have imagined at the beginning of 2020 that a viral particle with a diameter of approximately 60–140 nm would turn the world upside down, but it has. 60–140 nm is hard to visualize but if we placed a line of COVID-19 viruses across a pinhead, we would require about 15,000 of them.

If something this small can have such an impact globally, it demonstrates the impact each of us can have on the world around us - in our personal lives, in our workplaces and in the justice system more broadly. I have always appreciated this saying, varyingly attributed as an African proverb, a quote from the Dalai Lama or anonymous: "If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping with a mosquito."

Like everyone else, Forensic Foundations has had to change our operating structure. We are fortunate in that most of our contractors and discipline-specific experts have always worked remotely but Dale Parsell (Quality Manager) and Maritta Parsell (Manager, Auditing and Compliance) have worked from their home, while Ben Davey (Manager, Proficiency Testing Programs) and I have worked from our home. We are thankful that this has occurred in 2020, when IT usage is widespread. For those of you old enough, try to image doing this in the 1970's and 1980's.

Obviously, our face-to-face training and consultancy work has been put on hold or has been morphed into online activities: however, our auditing and proficiency testing programs steamed ahead. We have a number of clients who have booked face-to-face training or consultancies in 2021, or once international travel is allowed.

Below is a short snapshot of our 2020 activities, followed by plans for 2021.

### Forensic Foundations' activities – general

In May, we underwent two external audits:

- Bureau Veritas conducted a recertification audit against ISO9001; and
- NATA conducted a surveillance audit of ISO/IEC17043. Document Examination was added to our scope during this Audit.

We were pleased (but not surprised) that our certification to ISO9001 and accreditation to ISO17043 both continued.

We also undertook a review of our 2018-2021 Strategic Plan and 2019-2020 Business Plan and commenced development of the 2021-2025 Strategic and 2021-2022 Business Plans. As part of this process, we are asking for your input. We have created a short survey which can be accessed [here](#). Please let us know how we can assist you in the provision of flexible, fit-for-purpose forensic programs.

As part of this review, we have examined Forensic Foundations' social media presence and balanced this against the time required to keep multiple sites updated. As a result, we will only be maintaining one professional site. This site will be under my name (Anna Davey) on LinkedIn. I hope to see you all there.

On a personal note, I managed to attend the American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS) meeting in February, which as always was huge and very stimulating. I continue as a member of the Council of the Victorian Chapter of the Australian Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS) - the same acronym which made life a little complicated at the time .

Thanks to COVID-19, I have also been able to attend a number of virtual international conferences and meetings and have made presentations to:

- Asian Forensic Sciences Network, QASC Workshop
- o Proficiency Testing – So Much More Than Compliance
- Amity Institute of Forensic Sciences (India) Internal Web-Seminar
- o How professional silos hurt women and children

I also gave my lectures to students at Swinburne and Latrobe Universities on-line.

And for something completely different, I participated in an online discussion as part of a Victorian Law Week event organized by 'Sisters in Crime'. The ABC of DNA is now live on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PuWJlk1AvbQ&feature=youtu.be>

### **Training activities**

Although we have not conducted any training activities in 2020, we still receive feedback from past participants. This is an example of such feedback:

"Hi Anna, just thought I would let you know I was recently engaged as an expert ..... I provided a report on two questions contained in the client's instructions. My report was accepted with positive feedback. It was my first experience as an independent expert in a legal matter. I want you to know how valuable your two-day course was in helping me draft the report. Best wishes ....."

Face-to-face training programs will commence again in 2021, with a Provision of Expert Evidence workshop for Victoria Police E-Crime Squad and a Quality Management/Internal Auditors course for the Australian Defence Force.

We are also developing a live online course focusing on the remote presentation of evidence in Courts of Law. Stay tuned.

### **Proficiencytesting@forensicfoundations**

Looking back from 2018 to 2020, the trend of the provision of proficiency tests is extremely positive. 2021 numbers look lower at this stage but we have submitted a number of quotes, two of which form part of international tenders. And orders do not close until a month from the distribution date.

In 2020, we began our commercial arrangement with Ruiyuan Wende Technologies Ltd who are acting as our agent in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

We currently engage 14 'discipline-specific experts' to assist us with the test design, set up and assessment. If you are interested in working with us as a 'Discipline-Specific Expert', please do not hesitate to contact us.

In 2021 we are offering:

- 5 x Proficiency Tests for Biology
- 3 x Proficiency Tests for Chemical Criminalistic
- 1 x Proficiency Test for Fingerprint detection, enhancement and identification
- 1 x Proficiency Test for Document Examination

We are also offering Inter-Laboratory Collaborative Trials in each of:

- Digital Forensics
- Forensic Drug Analysis
- Chemical Criminalistics – Ignitable fluid residue
- Forensic Odontology

The 2021 Program can be downloaded [here](#). Suggestions for future Proficiency tests or Inter-Laboratory Collaborative Trials can be found [here](#).

### **External Auditing Program**

ISO 18385:2016 “Minimizing the risk of human DNA contamination in products used to collect, store and analyse biological material for forensic purposes – Requirements”

Forensic Foundations remains the sole auditing service (worldwide) for this standard and continues to operate as a subcontractor to Bureau Veritas (BV).

2020 has proven to be a difficult year. On-site visits had to be suspended for our international clients from March 2020 and domestically from May 2020. Following confirmation from BV in May 2020, initial and routine surveillance audits were conducted as desk-top reviews of specified records and procedures.

On-site Main and Recertification Audits could not be conducted. Recertification Audits could be partially completed as desk-top audits and an extension of 6 months was granted. This situation is currently under review by BV as the restrictions on travel continue.

Nine organizations now hold ISO 18385 certification (click here for more details).

Four other organizations are part way through the process, moving towards certification.

Other organizations have also expressed an interest but are currently on hold.

### **Consultancy**

Much of our consultancy work has been placed on hold at present, with one major exception – working with Thermo Fisher Scientific, we are providing support and training for an Asian Forensic Science laboratory seeking ISO17015 accreditation. This involves Quality Management awareness, process mapping, document review, internal auditor training and the conduct of internal audits and mock accreditation audit. At present this is wholly on line but we hope that once a vaccine is available, we will be able to introduce an auditing component on site.

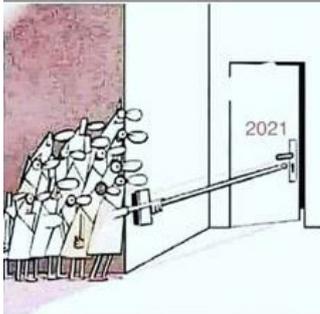
### **Vale**

Before I close, I would like to pay tribute to Dr Tony Raymond AM (31.12.1949 - 25.08.2020) – a valued friend and colleague. I knew Tony for 32 years – he was such a powerful influence in both my personal and professional life. This second photo was from our time at NIFS. I think we scrubbed up OK?? Tony, you are

missed.

Finally

On behalf of us all at Forensic Foundations, we wish you, your loved ones and your colleagues the very best at this season of Christmas and look forward to working with you all in 2021 and beyond.



Anna Davey  
Director



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