



Australian Association Of Gerontology

History of the AAG

The following history of the AAG has been compiled by Janet Angel, with contributions from Dr Anna Howe, Professor Gary Andrews, Ruth Inall and Professor Arthur Everitt.

FOUNDATIONS AND FOUNDERS

1950s - the beginnings

Dr David Wallace, a physician from Goulburn in New South Wales (NSW) is usually credited with founding the national association known as the Australian Association of Gerontology (AAG). There had been an informal Australian Gerontological Group, largely in NSW, since 1949. After attending the 4th International Congress of Gerontology in Italy in 1957, Dr Wallace returned to Australia with the aim of setting up an Australian Society of Gerontology. After extensive investigation, Dr Wallace concluded that there were then only six people in the whole of Australia who had a significant interest in Gerontology.



Dr David Wallace

Some 50 years on, the AAG has close to 1000 members. This history records the events and the people who have shaped the growth and development of the AAG over that time.

1960s - the foundations

The foundations of the Australian Association of Gerontology were laid on 5 July 1962 when Dr Geoffrey Hughes, the Medical Superintendent at Lidcombe State Hospital and Dr Arthur Everitt from The University of Sydney established the Gerontological Society of New South Wales. Dr Hughes became founding President and Dr Everitt was the founding Secretary/Treasurer. There were initially 33 members.

In 1963, Dr Sidney Sax and Sir Giles Chippendall, President of the National Old People's Welfare Council, also inspired by attending an international Conference (this time in Copenhagen), worked with Dr David Wallace to establish the Australian Association of Gerontology. The Inaugural National Conference of the AAG was held at the Australian National University in Canberra in June 1964. Sir John Eccles, a Nobel Prize winner, gave the inaugural address on the Physiology of Ageing. A listing of the 47 members present at the Inaugural National Conference is available [here ...](#) These included Ruth Inall, who has gone on to have 40 years as an active AAG member at the national and international levels. At its Annual General Meeting in 1999, the AAG awarded Foundation Member certificates to Ruth and the other eight surviving founding members.



Dr Geoffery Hughes



Dr Arthur Everitt

Becoming a National Body

It was at the AAG's 3rd Conference in 1967 that it was proposed that the three state societies that had been established separately should become affiliated with the national body. This proposal was duly adopted at the 4th Annual Conference of the AAG. The affiliation fee was then \$1.00.



Dr Ungar

Dr Sax

Dr Wallace

Dr Everitt

**First Conference of AAG
7 May 1965 Canberra**

Growth of State Divisions

It was almost 20 years before every state and territory came to have a Division of the AAG. Three states established independent associations that subsequently became Divisions of the national association:

The NSW Gerontological Society (founded in 1962) became a Division of the AAG on 17 September 1970.

The Queensland Association was formed in 1965 and became a Division on 17 September 1970.

The Victorian Society of Gerontology held its inaugural meeting on February 23rd, 1967 and formally joined the AAG in 1969.

In all other states and territories Divisions were directly established by the AAG:

- South Australian, 9 April 1972.
- West Australia, 14 June 1972.
- Tasmania, 3 September 1973.
- Northern Territory, 17 April 1991.
- Australian Capital Territory, 23 October 1991

PRESIDENTS

Four of the founding members became Presidents of the AAG. Dr Sidney Sax was the first president, followed by Dr Dick Gibson, then Dr David Wallace and later Dr Richard Lefroy. The AAG has always been a multidisciplinary society, although in the early years medical gerontology was dominant and the majority of members were medical doctors or nurses. The first woman President, in 1980, was Dr Glenda Powell, a physician from Brisbane. The first President who was not a medical practitioner was Bess McRae, a nurse, who became President in 1985.

Period of Office	Name
June 1964 – June 1966	Dr Sidney Sax (NSW)
June 1966 – July 1969	Dr Richard M Gibson (NSW)
July 1969 – August 1971	Dr David C Wallace (NSW)
August 1971 – September 1972	Dr Allan J Foster (Tas)
September 1972 – October 1976	Dr Keith Hirschfeld (Qld)
October 1976 – October 1979	Dr Richard M Gibson (NSW)
October 1979 – December 1980	Dr Horace Tucker (Vic)
December 1980 – October 1985	Dr Glenda Powell (Qld)
October 1985 – September 1988	Mrs Bess McRae (Vic)
September 1988 – October 1991	Dr Kevin Grant (NSW)
October 1991 – October 1995	Dr Richard B Lefroy (WA)
October 1995 – August 1997	Professor Gary Andrews (SA)
August 1997 – October 2000	Anna Howe PhD (Vic)
October 2000 – November 2003	Ms Barbara Squires (NSW)
November 2003 - November 2006	Professor Tony Broe (NSW)
November 2006 -	Associate Professor Laurie Buys (QLD)

The contributions of these early presidents are recognised by:

The RM Gibson Research Grants, supported by the RM Gibson Research Fund, and awarded to early career researchers on the basis of a competitive submission process. The RM Gibson Research Fund Committee has been chaired by Professor Gary Andrews (SA), Dr Anna Howe (Vic) and Professor Leon Flicker (WA).

The Travelling Fellowship is awarded annually to a distinguished researcher in Australia or from overseas, to contribute to the Annual Conference and to visit a number of State Divisions. Initially named to honour Dr Gibson the fellowship was renamed the Gary Andrews Travelling Fellowship in 2006, to honour Professor Gary Andrews, who died in May 2006.

The David Wallace Address and Medal, presented each year at the Annual Conference. The Award recipient usually gives a named address to the Conference

The Sidney Sax Memorial Book Award, awarded annually in conjunction with the Australasian Journal on Ageing.



Dr Sidney Sax



Dr Richard Gibson

SECRETARIES AND SECRETARIATS

Dr David Wallace was the first Honorary Secretary and was succeeded by Professor Gary Andrews. Ruth Inall (NSW) was Honorary Secretary of the AAG for about 20 years, from 1967 to 1985. Assoc. Prof Arthur Everitt (NSW) was Honorary Secretary in 1985/86 and was followed by Marion Shaw (Vic) who held the position from 1986 to 1994. Charles Young (SA), Roger Rumble(Tas) and Chris Shanley (NSW) and Evonne Miller (Qld) have successively taken on the role.

In 1994 the Association established its first professional secretariat and contracted the Flinders University Centre for Ageing Studies to provide administrative services. Dianne Langridge was the AAG Secretariat Officer until November 2005. The contract for the AAG Secretariat was transferred to Association Offices in December 2005.

In 2004 the AAG was funded by the Commonwealth Office for an Ageing Australia, to support the appointment of an Executive Officer for a period of two years. Janet Angel was appointed to this position in September 2004. Funding for this position was extended for a further two years in 2006.

DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONAL ROLES

International Association of Gerontology

The AAG formally joined the International Association of Gerontology (IAG) in the late 1960s but Australia had been actively involved through the recognition of the Australian Gerontological Group in NSW as a constituent Society since 1949.

In 1972 at the International Congress held in Kiev, a formal bid was made by the AAG and the recently formed Australian Geriatrics Society to host the 1978 World Congress. Although this bid was not accepted, it placed Australia squarely on the map in terms of international participation.

Australia hosted the 16th IAG World Congress in Adelaide in 1997, with video satellite links to pre-Congress events in Honolulu and Singapore. Professor Andrews who had led the bid to host the Congress, and was also AAG President at the time, became President of the IAG from 1998 to 2001, and Professor Mary Luszcz became Vice President and Secretary General for the same term.

Asia-Oceania Region of the IAG

Strong co-operation with the Japanese Society for Gerontology led to the formation of the Asia-Oceania Region of the IAG. Australia's leading role was recognised in the election of Dr Richard Gibson as first Chairman of the Region and Ruth Inall (AAG Honorary Secretary) as Secretary/Treasurer.

The first Regional Congress was held in Melbourne in December 1980. When Dr Gibson died suddenly in July 1980, Professor Gary Andrews took over as Regional Chair and served in this role for 10 years. Professor Andrews and Mrs Inall played a major role in organizing the next two regional conferences - Singapore in 1983 and Bangkok in 1987. They also assisted many nations in the region to set up associations, including developing draft constitutions. Regional Conferences were held in Yokohama (1991), Hong Kong (1995), Seoul (1999) and Tokyo (2003).

The regional body has had its permanent administrative office in Australia, which continued to be managed by Ruth Inall as Executive Secretary. In recognition of her service to the IAG, Ruth Inall was awarded the IAG Presidential Medal and in 2005 she was presented with a plaque commemorating her 25 years service with the Region.

The United Nations and the World Assemblies on Ageing

AAG representatives Gary Andrews, Ruth Inall and Sidney Sax were among the non-government members in the Australian Delegation to the First World Assembly on Ageing held in Vienna in 1982.

At the IAG 1997 International Congress in Adelaide, a joint UN Office on Ageing and IAG project, the Research Agenda on Ageing for the 21st Century, was established with Gary Andrews representing IAG and Alexandre Sidorenko from the UN as joint conveners. A series of high level expert global and regional meetings were held from 1999 to 2005 resulting in the published Agenda being presented to the second World Assembly in Madrid in 2002. A series of regional follow-up reports are expected to be published with an up-dated Agenda later in 2006. These meetings across the globe were all organised and administered by the AAG Secretariat and Event Organising Office at the Centre for Ageing Studies in Adelaide. A number of AAG members made contributions to these activities at various points.

The Valencia Forum, a major pre-World Assembly gathering of scientists, educators and practitioners (620 registrants) convened for the purpose of providing the scientific evidence base for the deliberations of the World Assembly on Ageing, was convened by Gary Andrews under IAG auspice.

RECOGNITION OF MEMBERS

Over the years, the AAG has instigated a number of ways of recognising outstanding contributions of its members to achieving the Association's goal of advancing knowledge of ageing.

Life Membership is the highest honour conferred by the AAG. The number of Life Members at any one time is limited to just one percent of the membership. A total of 12 Life Memberships have been awarded. A listing of Life Members is available [here ...](#)

Distinguished Service Awards were introduced in 1999. These Awards are made on the nomination of State Divisions. Across all Divisions, 69 members had received Distinguished Service Awards to 2005. A listing of Distinguished Service Awards is available [here ...](#)

Fellows of the AAG were also established in 1999 to recognise members' achievements in scholarship in Gerontology. Members apply for recognition as a Fellow of the AAG, on the basis of meeting a number of criteria, including contributions to AAG conferences and publication in the *Australasian Journal on Ageing*. Applications are reviewed by State Executives and approved by the National Council on the recommendation of State Divisions. By 2005, 59 members had been recognised as Fellows. A listing of Fellows is available [here ...](#)

PUBLICATIONS

Proceedings of Annual Conferences

The first volume of formal Proceedings of the Annual Conferences appeared after the 1969 Conference and continued in much the same format until 1987. From 1988, the Proceedings appeared in a new format and were edited by Dr Richard Lefroy and Dr Roger Warne (both WA Division). Since 1994, the Conference Abstracts have been published as a Supplement to the *Australasian Journal on Ageing* (AJA).

In 2005, presenters at the Annual Conference were given the option of submitting a full paper for peer review and publication by the Australian Association of Gerontology. In 2005 and 2006 there were thirty papers published by the Australian Association of Gerontology and made available through the website or on Compact Discs.

Australasian Journal on Ageing

In 1994, the AAG became a partner in publishing the *Australian Journal on Ageing* (from Volume 13, No 1). The Journal had been published by the Council on the Ageing since 1982, but in 1994 became a refereed journal under the editorship of Dr John McCallum (ACT). Subsequent Editors have all been AAG members: Professor Tony Jorm (ACT), Dr Dianne Gibson (ACT) and Associate Professor Susan Quine (NSW)..

The Australian Society for Geriatric Medicine became a third partner in the new publication, and in 1998, Aged and Community Services Australia became a fourth partner. Alzheimer's Australia is also involved as an Associate Partner.

The members of the Editorial Board are drawn from across the Asia-Oceania Region, and in recognition of its regional coverage, the name was changed to the *Australasian Journal on Ageing* in 1998 (from Vol. 17, No. 1). The AJA has achieved international recognition with a high ranking on international citation and impact indexes.

The AJA went on-line in 2004 (from Volume 23, No. 1). This advance came with publication of the journal moving to Blackwell Publishing Asia Pty Ltd.

More information about the *Australasian Journal on Ageing* can be found [here ...](#)

AAG National Newsletter

The AAG's beginning was marked by the publication of the first Newsletter of the Association, in March 1965. (Click here for link to early newsletters) This early National Newsletter was published until 1969. Over the next two decades newsletters were intermittent or published by State

Divisions. A national newsletter was reinstated in August 1996. Adelaide Bornmann (NSW) was Executive Editor until the production of the Newsletter moved to the Secretariat, with the Honorary Secretary having the role of Executive Editor.

Copies of available newsletters can be found [here ...](#)

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

Student Section

The AAG Student Section was established in 2004 with an initial grant of US\$800 from the International Association of Gerontology. The first Convenor is Professor Helen Bartlett (Qld). It has representatives from each state Division, regular teleconferences and a general meeting at each AAG Annual Conference. Helen Feist (SA/NT) has now taken on the role of National Student Representative and is supported by a representative from each state.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ageing Committee

The AAG Council and Divisions had for some years given considerable thought to how the AAG could best promote research and knowledge of ageing in indigenous Australian communities. Dr Rob Ranzjin (SA) stimulated much of this early discussion, and the South Australia Division worked closely with the Northern Territory Division in informing Council on these issues.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ageing Committee held its inaugural meeting in November 2004 and was formally established in May 2005. The Committee was an initiative of Professor Tony Broe (AAG President, 2003-2006) who has had a long-standing involvement in the provision of health services to Aboriginal communities, especially through his work in the La Perouse community in Sydney. The Committee holds quarterly telephone link ups and regional meetings. The first Convenor is Dr Lisa Jackson Pulver, Senior Lecturer (Development and Research), Muru Marri Indigenous Health Unit, Faculty of Medicine, University of NSW.

WIDER NETWORKS

The AAG mission is about research, education and multi-disciplinary networks and the Association has actively participated in the development of various networks with a focus on ageing.

Australian Society for Geriatric Medicine

In October 1972, physician members of the AAG established an Australian Geriatrics Society, now the Australian Society for Geriatric Medicine, as a separate body to further the development and recognition of geriatric medicine. Gary Andrews was appointed as President. Initially the new Society worked closely and held concurrent meeting with the AAG but by 1975 had been accepted as a Specialist Society of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians. The Australian Society for Geriatric Medicine is now an active specialist medical association and has many members in common with the AAG as well as being a partner in publishing the *Australasian Journal on Ageing*.

Building Ageing Research Capacity (BARC)

The coming of the 21st Century saw an increased interest on the part of the Commonwealth Government in the challenges of an ageing Australia, and the instigation of a series of projects

designed to expand capacity to undertake multi-disciplinary research into all aspects of ageing. National goals were articulated in the *National Strategy for an Ageing Australia*, the Prime Minister's Science, Engineering, and Innovations Council report *Promoting Healthy Ageing in Australia*, the *Framework for an Australian Ageing Research Agenda*, the *Stocktake of Australian Ageing Research and Policy Initiatives* and the national Building Ageing Research Capacities (BARC) program. The most significant outcome of these initiatives was the identification of 'Ageing Well, Ageing Productively' as a National Research Priority.

The AAG was an active contributor to each of these projects under the leadership of the President Barbara Squires (NSW), and the active involvement of Professor Gary Andrews (SA), Professor Hal Kendig (NSW), Professor Tony Broe (NSW), Dr Dianne Gibson (ACT) and other members.

Ageing Research Network and Directory

In November 1983, a meeting of researchers was held at the then National Research Institute of Gerontology and Geriatric Medicine in Melbourne (now the National Ageing Research Institute), immediately prior to the AAG Annual Conference in Hobart, to foster discussion of planning and collaboration in research. Convened by Dr Anna Howe and attended by 41 researchers, the meeting led to the publication of the *Ageing Research Network Directory* in 1984. The Directory was published triennially to 1996, then in 2000.

In September 2003, the Directory became much more accessible to those making entries and searching for research when it was launched as Ageing Research Online (www.aro.gov.au). This development came about through BARC, with the on-line directory managed by the Ageing Unit of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

The ARC/NHMRC Research Network in Ageing Well

The ARC/NHMRC Research Network in Ageing Well is an 'Ageing Well, Ageing Productively' initiative funded for five years by the Australian Research Council (ARC) and the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), as part of their Research Networks Program. With the aim of linking outstanding researchers from many disciplines, nurturing developing researchers, promoting projects between social and health researchers, and strengthening international collaboration, the Network complements the AAG by drawing on the expertise of AAG members in its management committee and advisory groups, and by organising collaborative activities and projects.

Emerging Researchers in Ageing

Encouraging postgraduate research in ageing was taken up by Professor Helen Bartlett at the Australasian Centre for Ageing at the University of Queensland in convening the first Emerging Researchers in Ageing (ERA) conference in 2002. ERA has grown to become a national conference, and although originally a completely separate conference from the AAG, the 2005 and 2006 ERA conferences were held the day before the AAG National Conference, maximising the opportunity for students to participate in both conferences. It is anticipated that the linkages between the AAG and ERA will strengthen over time as the AAG Student Section expands its role and activities.

AAG ARCHIVES

For many years, much AAG archival material was compiled by Dr Eric Cunningham Dax and then Mrs Marion Shaw, both of the Victorian Division. Dr Arthur Everitt has also been an AAG historian, and the paper that he published with Marion Shaw on “The Formation of Gerontological Societies in Australia”, in the *Australian Journal on Ageing*, Vol. 16, No. 2, May 1997, proved an invaluable source on the early years of the history of the AAG.

This history of the AAG up to 2006 will be up-dated annually after the National Conference and Annual General Meeting to record the major development that have taken place each year and the roles of those involved in these advances.