



The 30<sup>th</sup> ISANA National Conference was held at the Bayview Eden Melbourne, from 3-6 December 2019. To reflect this significant milestone in the Association's history, the theme for the conference was: *Leading and inspiring through collaboration: Student wellbeing and support services, today and tomorrow.*

The conference attracted over 340 delegates from across Australia, New Zealand and overseas including several ISANA Life members. The program carefully curated by the ISANA Conference Committee gave us the opportunity to explore and discuss the many factors that contribute to overall student success, both within and outside the classroom.

Delegates who arrived early on Tuesday 3 December, were treated to an energetic and Amazing Race 'Welcome to Melbourne' where teams of delegates followed clues held by City of Melbourne student volunteers and sponsored by Medibank Private. This was a hilarious activity where delegates had the opportunity to make new friends while discovering iconic places around the Melbourne CBD. Tired but happy delegates finished up at Medibank Place, Docklands for a cocktail party and a calming session from *Smiling Mind* to discuss the benefits of mindfulness for ourselves and our students.

The main conference program kicked off on Wednesday 4 December. We were delighted to have Parbin-ata Carolyn Briggs AM, Boon Wurrung Elder to provide us with a wonderful Welcome to Country. The Lord Mayor of Melbourne Sally Capp opened the conference with a warm welcome to delegates. Tracy Harris, Executive Director, Global Development and Performance, RMIT provided the first keynote presentation, sharing her 30-year journey in international education. Her personal journey mirrored the experiences of many at the conference who work in the sector.

Our plenary sessions and keynote speakers were thought-provoking and challenged delegates to look to the future whilst acknowledging the many successes over the past 30 years. None was more challenging than Arfa Noor's session, 'Decolonising the student experience: Are we helping or hindering the evolution of student identities?' and Professor Fazal Rizvi's panel on 'What headwinds are we facing?' Both sessions made us stop and think of what we do, our intentions, our preparedness for the future and the needs of international students.

The sessions provided delegates with information on successful strategies and provided the opportunity for all to engage with each other and develop important networks. We were particularly proud that this year's conference also provided many sessions where we heard from the students. The Student Panel chaired by ISANA Life member Melanie Duncan, was a highlight as was Gary Lee's session on Student Leadership. Students reflected on their overall student experience and shared their thoughts on strategies that would enhance their experience if they were put in charge. Students co-presented papers and chaired sessions. The only problem that many of us had was the inability to be at multiple sessions at the same time!

In celebration of the 30th Anniversary of ISANA, this year's conference gala dinner was a Black-Tie affair at the chandeliered venue, The Park. After a hiatus of some years, ISANA reintroduced the ISANA Awards, established in 2006. The winners were:

**International students' nomination for an outstanding support program (joint winners)**

- PSW (Social Work) mentoring project for international students and Community Centre Projects for Work Integrated Learning
- TEDxMonash University

**ISANA Members' Award for an outstanding individual**

- Gary Lee, City of Melbourne

**ISANA Council Award for an outstanding contribution to ISANA**

- Molly Bonnefin

**Life Member Award in recognition of an outstanding contribution by an individual whose contribution goes beyond the ordinary, or even the excellent, for an extended period**

- Mary Ann Seow

For more information on the awardees and the awards please see the ISANA website, <http://www.isana.org.au/isana-national-conference-2/>

The final day of the conference was a special day with sessions focusing on students, the future and the 30-year journey in student support. The day began with former Vice President, ISANA Victoria/Tasmania, Jen Walsh sharing the many projects and activities of the host branch, and an enlightening retrospective from Anna Kent on the origins of international student support and community engagement.

The conference wrapped up with an ISANA 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary retrospective from Life Members and a commentary from National President, Bronwyn Gilson and CISA National Secretary Varsha Devi on future directions.

This year's conference also had a special visual display for delegates. To celebrate the achievements of ISANA since its establishment, a display of memorabilia donated by members covering the 30 years was put on display. This linear wall of newsletters, photos, reports, resources and conference ephemera were a vivid show of the great work that ISANA and members have contributed to international education.

Congratulations to ISANA and all members – there was so much to celebrate, and we look forward to a further 30 years!

Special thanks to the conference committee members, volunteers and sponsors without whom we could not have put together this special conference.

Paula Durance and Mary Ann Seow  
30<sup>th</sup> ISANA National Conference Convenors  
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