

# **SPEAKER PROFILES AND PRESENTATION ABSTRACTS**

**NICM HEALTH RESEARCH INSTITUTE SYMPOSIUM 12 AUGUST 2021**  
MEDICINAL CANNABIS: RESEARCH, REGULATION AND EDUCATION

# PROFESSOR DENNIS CHANG WELCOME ADDRESS

**Director, NICM Health Research Institute,  
Western Sydney University**



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Dennis Chang is the Director of NICM Health Research Institute and a Professor of Pharmacology. He is also the lead of NICM Health Research Institute's Healthy Hearts Research Program.

His research interests include clinical and pharmacological studies of herbal medicine and other complementary medicine interventions at the Institute.

As the leading investigator of several significant clinical trials, Professor Chang's research projects have centred around evaluating herbal medicine, yoga and tai chi for the treatment of dementia, mild cognitive impairment, coronary heart disease, metabolic syndrome and type 2 diabetes. He has also been involved in preclinical research to evaluate molecular mechanisms and synergistic interactions of active components of herbal medicine.

Professor Chang's research has been published in a broad range of high-quality peer-reviewed journals such as British Journal of Pharmacology, Clinical Pharmacology and Therapeutics, Drug, and Journal of Translational Medicine. His research has been supported by various competitive funding agencies, governments and industry totalling \$7M.

Prior to joining NICM Health Research Institute, Professor Chang served a number of academic leadership roles within Western Sydney University including Research Director of School of Science and Health, and Associate Head of School of Biomedical and Health Science. He initially trained in medicine and received postgraduate training in pharmacology.

# PROFESSOR JEROME SARRIS CHAIR

**Professor of Integrative Mental Health, NICM  
Health Research Institute, Western Sydney  
University; Co-Director, Psychae Institute**



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Jerome Sarris is an NHMRC Clinical Research Fellow and Professor of Integrative Mental Health at NICM Health Research Institute at Westmead, Western Sydney University.

He is also a Co-Director of the recently launched Psychae Institute; is a Visiting Principal Research Fellow at Melbourne University, Florey Institute of Neuroscience and Mental Health; and holds an honorary Principal Research Fellow appointment at Melbourne University, Department of Psychiatry.

Professor Sarris has a particular interest in mood and anxiety disorder research pertaining to lifestyle medicine and nutraceutical psychopharmacology, and psychotropic plant medicine research (in particular on Kava, medicinal cannabis, and psychedelics).

He has over 200 academic publications, including journal articles featured in The American Journal of Psychiatry, Lancet Psychiatry, JAMA Psychiatry, and World Psychiatry. He has conducted many RCTs in the field, including three multicentre NHMRC Project Grants as CIA.

Professor Sarris was a founding Vice Chair of The International Network of Integrative Mental Health, an Australian Medicinal Cannabis Research and Education Collaboration Founding Member, and is a current American Botanical Council Board Member. He has been awarded the NHAA most notable contribution to research award, and the ANS Educator of the Year. Professor Sarris also chairs the Taskforce on Integrative and Complementary Medicine for the World Federation of Societies for Biological Psychiatry and the Canadian Network for Mood and Anxiety Treatments.

# DR RICHARD DI NATALE

**Former Federal Senator for Victoria and leader of the Australian Greens; Chair of the Medicinal Cannabis Health Advisory Council, Medicinal Cannabis Industry Association; and Public Health Advisor in Community Health**



Dr Richard Di Natale (MBBS, MHS, MPH, FAFPHM, FACRRM) is a former Australian Senator and leader of the Australian Greens from 2015 to 2020. Prior to entering the Senate, Dr Di Natale was a general practitioner and public health specialist having worked in Aboriginal health in the Northern Territory, on HIV prevention in India, and in the drug and alcohol sector. He now works as a public health advisor in community health.

During his time in the Senate, Dr Di Natale launched a senate inquiry examining barriers to patient access to medicinal cannabis in Australia. He now chairs the independent Medicinal Cannabis Health Advisory Council.

## Medicinal cannabis in Australia – Where have we come from and where are we going?

In 2016 the Australian parliament legalised the growing of cannabis for medicinal and scientific purpose and the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) later rescheduled cannabis from a prohibited substance to one where, in theory at least, any medical practitioner can prescribe medicinal cannabis.

However there continue to be significant barriers to access for patients. This presentation discusses the recent legislative reforms and what still needs to be done to improve access for patients.

# ADJUNCT PROFESSOR CAROLINE MACCALLUM

**Internal Medicine Specialist, Clinical Instructor,  
Department of Medicine, and Adjunct Professor  
Faculty Pharmaceutical Sciences and Associate  
Member Division of Palliative Care, University  
of British Columbia**



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Adjunct Professor MacCallum (MD) is an Internal Medicine Specialist with expertise in complex pain and cannabinoid medicine. She is a Clinical Instructor in the Department of Medicine; with cross appointments in pharmacy and palliative care at the University of British Columbia. As the Medical Director of Greenleaf Medical Clinic, she has worked with more than 6,000 patients using Health Canada approved medical cannabis since 2015. Adjunct Professor MacCallum is a key opinion leader in cannabis safety and a leader in evidence based medical cannabis knowledge translation. Her seminal piece Practical Consideration for Medical Cannabis Administration and Dosing, the first article of its kind, has been cited more than 290 times since 2018. Her work is available at [www.safe-cannabis.com](http://www.safe-cannabis.com)

## Cannabis safety updates; impairment, opioids and patient complexities

This presentation will highlight Adjunct Professor MacCallum's 2021 seminal publications including; *Duration of neurocognitive impairment with medical cannabis use; a scoping review* (Frontiers Psychiatry), *Practical strategies using medical cannabis to reduce harms associated with long term opioid use in chronic pain* (Frontiers Pharmacology) and "Is medical cannabis safe for my patients?" A practical review of cannabis safety considerations (European Journal of Internal Medicine).

# ADJUNCT PROFESSOR JOHN SKERRITT

**Deputy Secretary, Health Products Regulation  
Group, Department of Health, Australian  
Government**



Adjunct Professor John Skerritt has specific responsibility for the Therapeutic Goods Administration and the Office of Drug Control. He has extensive experience in medical, agricultural and environmental policy, as well as regulation, research management, technology application and commercialisation. He is an Adjunct Professor at the Universities of Sydney, Queensland and Canberra, and is a graduate of the Senior Executive Programs of London Business School and of the International Institute for Management Development in Switzerland.

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**Update from the Therapeutic Goods Administration and the Office of Drug Control**

# PROFESSOR TIM KARL

**Professor of Behavioural Neuroscience,  
School of Medicine, Western Sydney University**



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After completion of his PhD in Germany in 2003, Tim Karl moved to Australia and led research teams at the Garvan Institute (2004-2008) and Neuroscience Research Australia (2008-2016). He is now Professor for Behavioural Neuroscience at the School of Medicine, Western Sydney University. His preclinical research focuses on the neuro-behavioural consequences of gene-environment interactions and the discovery of new therapeutic targets for brain disorders including schizophrenia and dementia, thereby also considering cannabis and its constituents. Professor Karl has published over 100 research articles, invited reviews and book chapters and is currently funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council, the Ainsworth Medical Research Innovation Fund, as well as funding from industry.

## **First clinical insights into the therapeutic potential of CBD for frontotemporal dementia (FTD), and motor neuron disease, and drug addiction**

Cannabidiol (CBD) has become a focus point for therapeutic research into several human brain diseases including dementia and motor neuron disease (MND). This development is due to CBD's ability to reduce detrimental brain processes including oxidative stress and neuroinflammation, but also related to CBD's advantageous side effect profile compared to other more established classical treatment strategies (where available). However, clinical trials are time-consuming and expensive. Therefore, preclinical research strategies are commonly used as a first step to evaluate potential new therapeutic candidates in established *in vivo* model systems. Such research can provide first proof-of-principle insights into beneficial properties of new therapeutic compounds. The presentation will outline some of the recent research projects carried out in the Karl Laboratory, which are aimed at increasing our initial understanding of the potential value of CBD therapy for FTD and MND.

# **ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR JONATHON ARNOLD**

**Deputy Academic Director of Preclinical  
Research, The Lambert Initiative for  
Cannabinoid Therapeutics, Brain and Mind  
Centre, The University of Sydney**



Associate Professor Jonathon Arnold is the Deputy Academic Director of the Lambert Initiative, a research centre that specialises in the discovery and development of cannabis-based medicines. In 2018 he was one of four scientists selected to advise the WHO on their historical review of cannabis. He has been a Chief Investigator on 4 NHMRC grants involving cannabinoid research. Since 2016 his team has used the Scn1a+/- mouse model of childhood epilepsy to discover several phytocannabinoids with novel anticonvulsant properties. His recent work on CBD received the Epilepsia Basic Science Prize honouring the most significant advance in knowledge in the field of epilepsy in 2020.

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## **Advancing our understanding of how full-spectrum CBD products work**

CBD has recently been approved as a single molecule formulation to treat childhood epilepsies at high doses. However, full-spectrum CBD products are also being used that deliver much lower doses of CBD than shown to be effective in clinical trials. This begs the question of how these preparations work to reduce seizures. This talk will overview research that has discovered other “minor” phytocannabinids with anticonvulsant properties in preclinical models. It will also provide new evidence that suggests the acidic precursor molecule to CBD, cannabidiolic acid (CBDA), be considered as a major player in the anticonvulsant effects of full-spectrum CBD products.

# PROFESSOR XU-FENG HUANG

**NHMRC Research Leadership Fellow, Illawarra Health and Medical Research Institute, School of Medicine, University of Wollongong, and Australian Centre for Cannabinoid Clinical and Research Excellence**



[ihmri.org.au/researchers/  
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huang/](http://ihmri.org.au/researchers/distinguished-professor-xu-feng-huang/)

Distinguished Professor Huang (MBBS, PhD, DSc) is an NHMRC Research Leadership Fellow-L2 (2020-2015). He has made significant contributions to combat obesity induced by diet and antipsychotic drugs. His research: 1) discovered the central leptin resistance in the late stages of obesity, resulting in more than 1,000 research papers after his discovery; 2) discovered the satiety enhancer, oat  $\beta$ -glucan, for combating obesity, then incorporated into the NHMRC Australian Dietary Guidelines 2011, Food Standards ANZ 2015; 3) discovered the chemical site on antipsychotic drug responsible for obesity, leading to new drug development; 4) Cannabidiol improves neurites and prolongs lifespan in cell and *C. elegans* A $\beta$  models relevant to Alzheimer's disease. He published 263 research papers, had more than 13,223 citations, supervised 26 PhD student completions, received the 2010 Vice Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Research Supervision and the 2014 Vice Chancellor's Research Excellence Award for Senior Researcher of the Year.

## Cannabidiol improves neurites and prolongs lifespan in cell and *C. elegans* A $\beta$ models relevant to Alzheimer's disease

Cannabidiol (CBD) has a broad spectrum of potential therapeutic properties for neurodegenerative disease. Professor Huang's study shows that CBD prevented neurite deficits induced by A $\beta$ 1-42 by decreasing fatty acid amide hydrolase and increasing cannabinoid receptor 1. Furthermore, the study found that CBD extended lifespan and improved healthspan in *C. elegans* expressing human A $\beta$ . The neuroprotective effect of CBD was further explored by investigating the dopaminergic neurons using specific transgenic *dat-1::GFP* strains of *C. elegans*. These findings highlight the neuroprotective benefits of CBD and its potential therapeutic approach for treating neurodegenerative diseases.

# ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR GENEVIEVE STEINER

**Research Director, NICM Health Research  
Institute, Western Sydney University**



Associate Professor Genevieve Steiner (PhD) is an NHMRC Emerging Leadership Fellow and Director of Research at the NICM Health Research Institute, Western Sydney University. Her cognitive neuroscience research spans the early detection, prevention, and treatment of cognitive decline in older people with the aim of reducing dementia risk and improving quality of life. Associate Professor Steiner's current focus is on testing novel therapeutics that can provide early intervention for those at high risk of dementia, including a world-first medicinal cannabis trial for those with early-stage Alzheimer's disease. Associate Professor Steiner has attracted >\$15M AUD in grant funding, 20 awards and prizes, and has published >65 peer reviewed publications.

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## Cannabis sativa: A budding therapy for dementia

# PROFESSOR IAIN MCGREGOR

**Academic Director, The Lambert Initiative for  
Cannabinoid Therapeutics, Brain and Mind  
Centre, The University of Sydney**



Iain McGregor is Professor of Psychopharmacology and Academic Director of the Lambert Initiative for Cannabinoid Therapeutics in the Brain and Mind Centre at the University of Sydney, Australia. The Lambert Initiative aims to fast-track research into the therapeutic benefits of cannabinoids in various disease states including epilepsy, pain, cancer, addictions, and mental health conditions. The Lambert Initiative is also engaged at a social and political level to improve community and professional education around medicinal cannabis and to bring about evidence-based regulatory change and improved patient access.

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## Lambert Initiative: A clinical research update

The Lambert Initiative clinical team has been busy and productive since the last NICM HRI symposium. After their collaborative study on vaporised cannabis and driving with researchers in Maastricht (lead Dr Tom Arkell), they have followed up with a clinical trial of CBD effects on simulated driving (lead Dr Danielle McCartney). Clinical trials of CBD/THC effects on primary insomnia (Anastasia Suraev) and Tourette syndrome (Phillip Mosley) are almost completed. New clinical trials involving novel phytocannabinoids CBN and CBG are at the planning stage, as is an analysis of legal homegrown cannabis in the ACT (the CAN-ACT study). They continue with their survey work including the recently completed CAMS20 survey and also the analysis of current patterns of medicinal cannabis prescribing under the SAS-B scheme.

# PROFESSOR JENNIFER MARTIN

**Chair of Clinical Pharmacology and Head of Medicine, School of Medicine and Public Health, The University of Newcastle; and Director, Australian Centre for Cannabinoid Clinical and Research Excellence**



Professor Jennifer Martin (FRACP, PhD) is a dual-accredited clinical pharmacologist and physician. She is Chair of Clinical Pharmacology at the University of Newcastle and a general physician for Hunter New England Local Health District. Professor Martin is the Director of the NHMRC Australian Centre for Cannabinoid Clinical and Research Excellence (ACRE), and the UON Centre for Drug Repurposing and Medicines Research. Her research spans all of the pharmacology disciplines from basic to translational, including clinical pharmacology, personalised medicine, pharmaceutical regulation, targeted therapies and therapeutic drug monitoring.

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## The NSW CARE study update: Observational data to guide cannabis medicines use in the real world.

Undertaking clinical trial research with cannabis medicines involves unique considerations due to the pharmacologically complex nature of cannabis and vulnerabilities of different clinical populations. This is particularly so for vulnerable population groups such as advanced cancer or palliative care groups. The Australian Centre for Cannabinoid Clinical and Research Excellence (ACRE) is Australia's first federally funded research centre of excellence in medicinal cannabinoids. ACRE is leading the State government funded, multisite Cannabinoids for Symptom Control in Advanced Cancer, an Open Label Prospective Clinical Trial in New South Wales (CARE NSW). Trial development has involved overcoming significant barriers specific to cannabis related clinical trials in palliative care cohorts and has necessitated the development of protocols and frameworks which can have been guiding other cancer and non cancer investigator initiated clinical trials around the country. The NSW CARE observational study is now recruiting widely across regional and metro sites in NSW. Evidence is developing around safety and efficacy, interactions with anticancer drugs and supply issues.

# DR THOMAS ARKELL

**Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Centre for  
Human Psychopharmacology, Swinburne  
University of Technology**



Dr Thomas Arkell (PhD) is a behavioural pharmacologist who studies cannabis and its effects on driving performance and cognitive function. He recently completed his PhD with the Lambert Initiative for Cannabinoid Therapeutics at the University of Sydney. Dr Arkell now works at Swinburne University as a postdoctoral research fellow, where he leads the medical cannabis research program. He has a strong interest in medical cannabis and issues around road safety and roadside drug testing.

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## Cannabis and driving

Driving is one of the main concerns that patients have when starting medical cannabis treatment. This presentation will provide an overview of the research around cannabis and driving and look at what we do and don't know. It will also provide an overview of the current regulatory framework in Australia.

# DR JESSICA MILLS

**Postdoctoral Research Fellow, The Australian Centre for Cannabinoid Clinical and Research Excellence, School of Psychology and Illawarra Health and Medical Research Institute, University of Wollongong**



Dr Jessica Mills is an Australian Centre for Cannabinoid Clinical and Research Excellence (ACRE) Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the School of Psychology at the University of Wollongong, who was awarded her PhD in Medicine in December 2020. Dr Mills' research focuses on identifying biomarkers and risk factors for physical and psychological conditions to improve treatment outcomes, with depression being her area of expertise. Her doctoral research examined the role of peripheral hormones as biomarkers and risk factors for problematic eating behaviours and obesity in depression. Dr Mills is currently extending on her PhD research by investigating the potential for cannabidiol to act as a novel treatment for depression, hormone and brain changes in early-stage dementia.

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## CBD for early-stage dementia: A clinical trial protocol

As a leading and increasing cause of global morbidity and mortality, the prevention, delay of onset and/or treatment of dementia in its early stages is necessary to improve quality of life. Cannabidiol (CBD) is associated with neuroprotective, regenerative, antidepressant, hormone and symptom regulating properties, suggesting that it may be beneficial to early-stage dementia treatment, however this is yet to be thoroughly investigated. The proposed clinical trial aims to determine whether daily treatment with pure CBD over a 12-week period is associated with improved neurobiological, physiological, behavioural and psychological outcomes in individuals living with early-stage dementia.

# MADILYN COLES

**PhD Candidate, School of Medicine,  
Western Sydney University**



Madilyn Coles is a PhD candidate at Western Sydney University studying the therapeutic potential of CBD-enriched cannabis extracts for dementia. Her research interest, centring on cannabis and its application as a complementary medicine, stems from a personal family history of medicinal cannabis use and her desire to uncover further applications of this medicine. She is also interested in the synergistic and entourage effects of cannabis for medical use. Ms Coles is supported by a PhD scholarship from NHMRC Dementia Centre for Research Collaboration and is involved in a preclinical trial evaluating a novel cannabis preparation in a mouse model of dementia.

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## **Chronic 5 mg/kg cannabidiol (CBD) treatment reverses cognitive deficits in a mouse model of Alzheimer's disease**

*In vitro* and emerging *in vivo* evidence suggests that cannabidiol possesses therapeutic-like properties for the treatment of Alzheimer's disease. Here, we evaluated the potential of chronic treatment with 5 mg/kg cannabidiol to reverse the behavioural deficits of adult APPSwe/PS1 $\Delta$ E9 mice. APPSwe/PS1 $\Delta$ E9 mice were characterised by object recognition deficits and delayed spatial learning, both of which were reversed by cannabidiol. APPSwe/PS1 $\Delta$ E9 mice exhibited a hyper-locomotive and anxiogenic-like phenotype, had wild type-like motor abilities, intact spatial memory, and impaired sensorimotor gating, none of which were affected by cannabidiol. Future research should consider the molecular mechanisms behind cannabidiol's beneficial properties for Alzheimer's disease transgenic mice.

# JUSTIN SINCLAIR

**PhD Candidate, NICM Health Research Institute,  
Western Sydney University**



Justin Sinclair is a PhD candidate and pharmacognosist at NICM Health Research Institute, Western Sydney University. His doctoral research is investigating the safety, tolerability and effectiveness of medicinal cannabis for pain and endometriosis-associated symptoms via mixed methods research. He is the CSO for Australian Natural Therapeutics Group and has also served on United in Compassion's Scientific Advisory Board since 2015, with a recent appointment to the board of the Australian Medicinal Cannabis Association in 2020.

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## **Medicinal cannabis for endometriosis (EndoCann): The journey so far.**

Previous research published by NICM Health Research Institute reported that women are utilising illicit cannabis for therapeutic purposes to manage the pain and associated-symptoms of endometriosis in Australia and New Zealand. This presentation outlines the mixed methods approach being employed by Mr Sinclair for his doctoral project investigating the safety, tolerability and effectiveness of medicinal cannabis in the endometriosis cohort and reports results from North American retrospective archival data, as well as results from an international survey, which includes substitution effect, self-rated effectiveness and side effect data.

# SOMAYEH MIRLOHI

**Postdoctoral Research Fellow, The Florey  
Institute of Neuroscience and Mental Health,  
University of Melbourne**



Somayeh Mirlohi has a PhD in Molecular Pharmacology from the Department of Biomedical Sciences, Faculty of Health and Medicine Sciences at Macquarie University. Her PhD focused on ion channel modulation by cannabinoids and exploring its clinical implication in pain and epilepsy. She has recently started a new role with The Florey Institute of Neuroscience and Mental Health.

## **The pharmacological characteristics of phytocannabinoid and synthetic cannabinoids on T-type calcium channels *in vitro*.**

Ms Mirlohi's presentation will focus on how phytocannabinoids and synthetic cannabinoids affect biophysical/pharmacological activity of T-type calcium channels which play a critical role in many physiological processes and regulate rhythmicity in the heart and brain.

T-type calcium channels can be encoded by the CaV3 genes and activated near resting membrane potentials. They are thought to play a critical role in pain signalling, epilepsy, and other conditions. These channels are inhibited by the endogenous cannabinoid, and some phytocannabinoids such as Δ 9 - tetrahydrocannabinol and cannabidiol, however understanding molecular pharmacology of less abundant phytocannabinoid and Synthetic Cannabinoids (SCs) on these channels is poor. Ms Mirlohi's data showed that selected phytocannabinoid and SCs are able to modulate T-channels and may have potential for therapeutic use in pain and epilepsy via T-type calcium channel modulation.

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# FIONA PATTEN, MP

**Member for the Northern Metropolitan in the Victorian Parliament's Legislative Council; and Federal Leader of the Reason Party**



Fiona Patten is the Member for the Northern Metropolitan in the Victorian Parliament's Legislative Council.

Leader of The Reason Party, Ms Patten was first elected in 2014 and re-elected in 2018.

Since entering Parliament, she has garnered respect from all sides of politics, working to deliver legislative reforms that many thought impossible. From creating Safe Access Zones laws that now protect clients of fertility clinics from protestors, through to being the driving force behind Victoria's Voluntary Assisted Dying legislation, and establishing the states' first medically supervised injecting room, Ms Patten has a track record of delivering on some of the difficult policy issues.

She is Chair of the Victorian Parliaments Legal and Social Issues Committee, which is currently undertaking an Inquiry into the use of Cannabis. Ms Patten was instrumental in establishing Victoria's medicinal cannabis laws and is currently working with the Victorian Government's Medicinal Cannabis and Driving Working Group, which has finalised recommendations to ensure that medicinal cannabis patients are not discriminated against in our road laws.

Throughout 2019 and 2020, Ms Patten chaired the parliament's Inquiry into Homelessness, has successfully passed her hard-fought-for Spent Convictions legislation and has handed a landmark report to the Victorian Government on Decriminalisation of Sex Work.

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# **ADJUNCT ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR DANIEL PERKINS**

**Co-Director Psychae Institute; Adjunct  
Associate Professor, Centre for Mental Health  
at Swinburne University of Technology;  
Honorary Research Fellow, School of Social  
and Political Science, Faculty of Arts, University  
of Melbourne**



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Daniel Perkins is a Co-Director of the recently launched Psychae Institute in Melbourne; an Adjunct Associate Professor in the Centre for Mental Health at Swinburne University of Technology; and an Honorary Research Fellow in the School of Social and Political Science at the University of Melbourne.

Prior to joining Psychae Institute, Adjunct Associate Professor Perkins was the Director of the Office of Medicinal Cannabis in the Victorian Department of Health, responsible for drug development, research and access initiatives.

At the Department he led a number of medicinal cannabis research projects including a major policy paper considering the issues and risks associated with medicinal cannabis and driving that was recently published in the International Journal of Drug Policy. Adjunct Associate Professor Perkins was also the Department of Health representative on the Victorian government's high level multidisciplinary working group considering this issue.

At the University of Melbourne, he led Australia's first ayahuasca and mental health studies, including the largest ever study of almost 10,000 ayahuasca drinkers in 50 countries; the first Australian research forum on the medical use of psychedelics for psychiatric disorders; and was co-founder of the Medicinal Psychedelics Research Network.

Adjunct Associate Professor Perkins has expertise relating to the mental health effects of psychedelics, as well as drug regulation, policy, and drug development, with around two decades experience working across government, non-government, and academic settings, as well as being a registered psychotherapist.

# DR MAGGIE DAVIDSON

**Lecturer of Environmental Health and  
Occupational Hygiene, School of Science,  
Western Sydney University**



Dr Davidson is a lecturer in environmental health and occupational hygiene at Western Sydney University and adjunct senior lecturer at Edith Cowan University, with a passion for increasing awareness of, and working for the prevention of occupational and environmental lung diseases.

Her interest in medicinal cannabis and industrial hemp work health and safety arose out of the observation that OHS often appears to be the missing link when discussing the development of these industries.

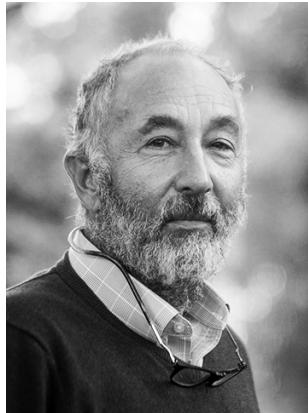
Currently, Dr Davidson's research is focused on exploring the toxicology of organic dusts (cannabis, industrial hemp and other agricultural exposures), artificial stone dusts and fibres, so that we can better understand the potential health risks associated with exposure to these hazards.

She is a full member of the Australian Institute of Occupational Hygienists, and member of the Thoracic Society Australia and New Zealand and Lung Foundation Australia Working Party for Occupational Lung Disease Training Course, and the Department of Health's Biotoxin-related Illness Advisory Committee.

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# **ADJUNCT AND PRACTICE PROFESSOR DAVID HEILPERN**

**Adjunct and Practice Professor, School of Law  
and Justice, Southern Cross University**



David Heilpern was appointed as a Magistrate in 1998, and was at the time the youngest magistrate in Australia. He 'retired' in May 2020. Mr Heilpern sat in the criminal, mining, family, industrial, coronial and children's jurisdictions of the Local Court, and was the Senior Civil Magistrate for five years. During his time on the bench, he was the principal educator for new magistrates throughout Australia and the Pacific and made several important reported decisions on criminal, environmental and evidence law.

Prior to his appointment, Mr Heilpern was a litigation lawyer on the North Coast where he co-founded the law school at Southern Cross University, rising to becoming the Acting Dean in 1996. Mr Heilpern maintained a litigation practice throughout this time, representing a wide range of defendants including high profile clients North East Forrest Alliance and Nimbin Hemp. During this time he graduated with a Masters in Law and was pronounced the Alumni of the Decade for the University in 2005.

Mr Heilpern has written four published books, three of which have had multiple editions, dozens of refereed journal articles, and is a prize-winning short story writer and poet.

He has recently been appointed as a Professional Practice Professor and Adjunct Professor at the School of Law and Justice at Southern Cross University. Mr Heilpern has returned to the practice of law and his writing is now focussed on drug law reform, aboriginal overrepresentation in the criminal justice system and environmental activism..

# RHYS COHEN PANEL MODERATOR

**Editor-at-large, Cannabiz; and Cannabis Consultant**



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Mr Cohen has delivered consulting projects to most of Australia's leading cannabis companies and has worked extensively with the Lambert Initiative for Cannabinoid Therapeutics at the University of Sydney. He has presented at numerous industry events including ACannabis (2020); Prohibition Partners Live (2020); and New Frontier Global Cannabis Town Hall (2020).

His industry analysis has been cited by Deloitte Access Economics; the Victorian Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources; the Commonwealth Office of Drug Control; the Commonwealth Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs; and the International Journal of Drug Policy.

Mr Cohen has also appeared in ABC News; The Australian Financial Review, The Age; The Sydney Morning Herald; and MJBiz Daily. He is the editor-at-large for Australia's leading industry news platform Cannabiz. He also sits on the Advisory Board of market intelligence and research company FreshLeaf Analytics.

Mr Cohen specialises in strategic advice, research, analysis, and creative solutions to challenges faced by both public and private sector enterprises.

# CASSANDRA HUNT

**Managing Director, FreshLeaf Analytics**



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Cassandra Hunt is the Managing Director of FreshLeaf Analytics. She has extensive experience in health having advised pharmaceutical, life sciences, healthcare and consumer goods organisations on innovation, strategy and growth.

Ms Hunt is highly skilled at bringing FreshLeaf's diverse capability sets together to help medicinal cannabis clients identify opportunities for growth, shape data-led strategies, and develop new products, services and experiences.

Prior to joining FreshLeaf Analytics, she built a career advising businesses on how to grow through innovation and human-centred design. Ms Hunt has worked with boutique consulting firms around the globe and, most recently, was a Partner at Accenture.

# JAMES GASKELL

**COO, Australian Natural Therapeutics Group**



James is the Chief Operating Officer of Australian Natural Therapeutics Group (ANTG). ANTG is a proudly Australian, independently owned medicinal cannabis and hemp company that operates licensed GACP and GMP cultivation and manufacturing locations in Australia with an award winning affiliate operation in San Francisco. ANTG supplies high-quality medicine to patients in Australia, the European Union and New Zealand and services California's medicinal and adult use markets.

With an executive leadership background in the travel, technology and advertising industries, Mr Gaskell has also led brands, projects and operational initiatives globally in travel, IT, automotive, CPG, finance, beauty and manufacturing. He also serves as an investor and board advisor to a number of businesses in security technology, travel distribution, talent management and recruitment.

Mr Gaskell is a board member of the Australian Medical Cannabis Association.

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# DR LEON WARNE

**Head of Research and Innovation,  
Little Green Pharma**



Dr Leon Warne is a researcher and academic with over 10 years' experience in the field of pain medicine. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Science, a Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine and a PhD in pain-management and assessment.

Dr Warne leads a translational researcher group investigating a novel genetic treatment for people suffering chronic neuropathic pain. His passion for research and development focused on providing integrative medical solutions to improve patient quality of life led Dr Warne to his current role as Head of Research and Innovation at Little Green Pharma.

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His clinical research interests are assessment and management of pain in patients incapable of self-reporting; and utilisation of novel drug delivery technologies to optimise bioavailability and dosing efficacy of medicinal cannabis therapeutics.

# DR SUD AGARWAL

**Specialist Anaesthetist; and Co-founder and CEO, Cannvalate**



Dr Sud Agarwal is an Australian specialist anesthesiologist, physician researcher, ASX Board Director and holds an honorary academic position with Swinburne University of Technology.

His research interests span across the use of cannabinoid-derived and entheogen-derived novel pharmaceuticals in a variety of different medical indications. Dr Agarwal's current research interests include disorders of sleep, chronic and acute pain and a variety of neurological diseases.

He currently leads companies with a combined total of five open INDs (Investigational Drug Files) and has pharmaceutical assets in pre-IND stage and also multiple assets "in the clinic" undergoing pivotal phase 2 and 3 trials.

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# TOMMY HUPPERT

**Founder and CEO, Cannatrek**



Tommy Huppert, Founder and CEO of Cannatrek Limited, is a start-up entrepreneur and medicinal cannabis health economist.

Cannatrek is one of the first enterprises in Australia to secure all federal and state government licenses to import cannabis seeds, research, grow, process, manufacture, and distribute medicinal cannabis products.

His mission is to not only place the cannabis plant front and centre in production excellence but to funnel resources for patient care solutions and deliver affordable medicine to those in need.

He has established the “Seed to Patient” business model combining cutting edge cultivation expertise and world-class manufacturing practices to deliver high quality products, with a clinical research focus on mental health. This strategy has been instrumental in Cannatrek’s Major Project Status, a Commonwealth Government’s recognition of the strategic significance of a project to Australia.

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