

Volume 40 Issue 2 I June 2020

Editor: Samantha Gunning



# Science ASSIST re-opens!

CSIRO Education has offered interim funding for Science ASSIST and will work in collaboration with ASTA to secure long term sustainable funding for the program.

The Science ASSIST team has reopened the Q&A section of the website to answer all of your questions regarding school laboratory and science room safety.

You have continued free access to all of the technical resources including SOPs, RAs, Information sheets and the Chemical Management Handbook.

To stay up-to-date on all the latest questions subscribe to the Science ASSIST eNews.

assist.asta.edu.au





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### COPYRIGHT REMINDER

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### **DISCLAIMER**

The views expressed in "Lablines" are not necessarily the opinions of the committee. There is no responsibility taken for the results of any experiments published in "Lablines" and replicated elsewhere. Risk assessments should be carried out before attempting same.



Geoff Gleadall LTAV President

Things have been very hard for many of us recently, and that cannot be helped. But the current pandemic has created some unique problems for LTAV as well.

It is with great regret that I must tell you that LABCON 2020 will not go ahead. We are acutely aware that this will have an impact on your professional development needs but we can see no way around this step.We are also under some serious financial stress. The annual membership fee was

# President's Report

originally set to cover our recurrent costs such as the production of Lablines and the maintenance of the website. We have not raised this fee since our change of name but it was clear, even before the current situation, that this fee no longer covers our costs. So again, with regret, we must put a motion on notice for the AGM to increase the annual fee. What the final figure will be has not yet been determined.

On the topic of fees, these were due on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April. We are aware that some of you have been stood down and that others have been told that funds are not available for schools to pay this. Membership is for individuals not for schools, and while it is entirely appropriate to ask our employers to

cover this (as they get a considerable benefit from us being members) it is possible to pay it oneself and claim it to be reimbursed - or even, in the event of a school refusing to pay, to claim it on your tax (as membership of a professional organisation).

For those few of you suffering financial hardship as a result of the pandemic, please contact the committee so we can make arrangements to help you, as soon as possible.

Your committee is still here and working hard for you and we will maintain the services we provide as far as we can until things return to normal - and they WILL return to normal.



Samantha Gunning Lablines Editor

Hello members! Welcome to your June edition of Lablines. SO much has happened since March, but hopefully by now you have found yourself in, or starting to ease in to, some kind of normality. Through conversations on the list, we saw that the last few months have been different experiences for all of us. Some of us

# From the Editor

have been on campus since day one of term two (like myself!), with business as usual, or maybe being called upon for some new types of duties. Some have been working from home, creating new and interesting routines - plenty of cups of tea and coffee mandatory (check out our Week in the Life of a Lab Tech this month!). Others have found themselves on the lookout for a new workplace perhaps, a fresh start might be a blessing in disguise. Whilst we have all had some very different experiences in the light of current events, we are still very much connected as lab techs

- whether in the workplace or not. It was so interesting to hear about the fun and different things you have been up to, or how you have handled the challenges that have been presented in recent times. We have a few of you featured in this edition of Lablines, and I wish to thank all of you that have sent me your contributions to include. I hope you enjoy seeing your stories in print, and I hope your fellow members will love reading them as much as I love receiving them.



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# NOTICE

# KEY DATES 2020

Deadline for next Lablines (Sept)

I 18th August

**Next LTAV Committee Meeting** 

I 28th July

STAR Week

I 24th - 28th August

# THANK YOU! YOU ARE AWESOME!

"I would like to say thank you to Jessica Boys for her fantastic work on Lablines over the last few years.

I would also like to say thank you to the rest of the LTAV committee for their continued support for all techies and the valuable role they play."

Donna Lavery

"Thank you to Yolanda Sipin for helping me out with some spare parts for our old Lego Technics kits, including posting them to me."

Janelle Gehling

Ever had a fellow Lab Tech do something super nice for you? Ever seen a Lab Tech do something awesome, far beyond their call of duty?

This is your chance to say

# THANK YOU!

and to recognise those Lab Techs who you think are

# AWESOME!

Please send a sentence or short paragraph to s.gunning@braemar.vic.edu.au to be included in the next edition of Lablines.

# BOARD

It has long been recognised that a new technician's first year in education can be very difficult. LTAV has decided to support beginning technicians by offering

# FREE FIRST YEAR LTAV MEMBERSHIP

deemed to be paid by the LTAV Committee.

The following conditions apply:

- a. The payment is at the discretion of the committee and will apply for the course of each membership year,
- b. The payment is to be made only on behalf of technicians in their first year working in education.
  - c. Members who are given this benefit are expected to continue their membership in subsequent years.
- d. Such members will have all the rights and obligations of ordinary members, but in accepting the payment also agree not to run for office during that same first year

Please refer all interest and enquiries to:

admin@ltav.org.au

# WANTED

### RELIEF LABORATORY TECHNICIANS

If you work part time or you know someone who has school laboratory experience and would like to earn some extra money...

Please contact Mary Jones

jones.mary.l@edumail.vic.gov.au

Your name will be added to the Laboratory Technician Relief list for the Melbourne Region. Laboratory Technicians that are available to work in Regional Victoria are also encouraged to make contact!

# CONASTA UPDATE

SETA wishes to inform you that CONASTA 69, 2020 has been cancelled. It was to be held in Canberra 5-8 July this year. ASTA is now planning for CONASTA 69, 2021.

SASTA has working hard to plan for CONASTA 70 be held in Adelaide in 2021, however, with this year's cancellation it looks like it will be held in Canberra

Kind Regards

Wendy Shearer

SETA President



# Calling all Laboratory Chemists and Managers, Chemistry Teachers and Researchers

# **OUTSTANDING LABORATORY TECHNICIAN OF THE YEAR**

The Victorian Branch of the RACI is seeking nominations for the 2020 Outstanding Laboratory Technician of the Year awards.

The purpose of this Award is to recognise the valuable contribution made by Technicians in the pursuit of chemistry. Criteria for the Award are as follows:

- Technicians must be nominated by one or more Full Members (MRACI, FRACI) of the Institute. (Note it is expected that the person nominated will have worked closely with the nominating RACI member(s) for at least 12 months).
- Nominations must include a CV, and a brief report, explaining the relationship of the applicant to the nominee (eg. colleague, manager etc), and covering the following areas, with examples of the Candidate's:

Achievement - expertise and effort that have resulted in an exceptional milestone being reached or exceeded.

<u>Collaboration</u> - outstanding teamwork and/or leadership that has ensured a critical task was completed regardless of the challenges faced.

<u>Inspiration</u> - knowledge and expertise that has inspired colleagues, co-workers, students (at all levels), customers or the public.

<u>Ingenuity</u> - inventive thinking and novel application of technical skills that has solved a problem, improved efficiency or resulted in a new concept.

<u>Development</u> - significant personal development that has increased their knowledge and/or technical ability (outside of their routine duties) to the benefit of the organisation.

The RACI Victorian Branch Committee will make the final selection of the winning candidate(s) and may seek further information about candidate(s) from nominating member(s). The Branch may decide not to make an Award if no suitable candidates are nominated, or to make more than one Award if several candidates are judged to be outstanding.

The Award(s) will be presented at the Victorian Branch AGM in September, and will consist of a Certificate and a small monetary prize.

**CLOSING DATE FOR NOMINATIONS IS 9 August 2020** 

Applications, and any further enquiries, to be sent to <a href="mailto:raci-vic@raci.org.au">raci-vic@raci.org.au</a>

# In the News – 'Our World' Edition! LTAV Virtual Trivia Night

# Jessica Boys

On the 6th May, 24 fun-loving Lab Techs let their hair down for a night of Lab Tech Trivia via Zoom. The meeting began at 7pm and the atmosphere was lovely as each Lab Tech entered and was welcomed by all. The first half hour was a chance to catch up and put faces to all those names we have seen on the List-serv.



Our host, Lauren Farrugia from Bialik College, was an absolute legend and led a well-organised evening with much enthusiasm. Our evening was divided into four rounds: General Science, Biology, Chemistry and Physics. Each section was specifically catered to our role as Lab Techs.



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	A	В	С	D	Ε	F
1		Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4	TOTAL
2	Jess Dowton	9	9	8	9	35
3	Jo & Cat	8	9	10	6.5	34
4	Leonie	10	7	8	8	33
5	Gen	6	10	7	10	33
6	Kate Fieldew	6	10	9	8	33
7	Linda Pegler	8	9	8	7	32
8	janelle g	8	7	10	6	31
9	Will I is	7	7	7	9	30
10	Maeve Will I was	7	9	8	5.5	30
11	Al Bryant	8	7	7	7	29
12	Pam Arnold	8	5	9	6	28
13	It's Sarah	6	7	8	7	28
14	Fay Will I be	7	7	6	8	28
15	Dianne	9	4	6	8	27
16	Jess Boys	4	7	8	5	24
17	Kellee	4	8	6	6	24
18	Liliana	5	6	6	7	24
19	Kerry	5	6	7	6	24
20	katerina	3	6	5	8	22
21	Ros	4	7	6	4	21
22	Jeshua Wil I son	7	3	2	6	18
23	Deborah	5	6	4		15

After each round, scores were added to a shared google spreadsheet so that participants could see the score tallies as the night progressed.

A small break between rounds allowed everyone to discuss the trivia questions and share prac ideas. Many ideas and resources were shared, and it was decided that the event could definitely be counted as PD. You could feel the buzz slowly increase as each round went by and the end came nearer. In the end, with only 1 point in it, Jess Dowton from Academy of Mary Immaculate took the win! Congratulations to Jess, on the win, and to Lauren, for a very successful night.



Since the 6th May, a few more trivia nights have been! Keep an eye out on the list-serv for the next event!



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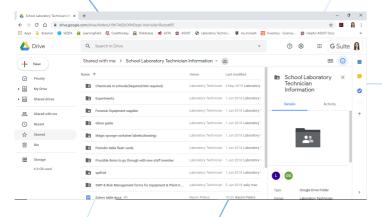
Melbourne
David Kline
1300 785 003
0402 906 201
david@cleanway.com.au

Sydney
Peter Dickey
1300 785 003
0411 603 683
peter@cleanway.com.au

# Lab Tech Collaborative Archives

# Tane Bragg, Wheelers Hill Secondary College

Since I joined the LTAV list, I have witnessed a wealth of knowledge shared from laboratory technicians both near and far. This knowledge is accrued from both onthe-job training and industry experience.



A friendly reminder and for some an introduction to the original archive that I created can be accessed via: https://drive.google.com/open?id=19h7AtZbSYiNDzqb-Vuh1uVp1RulzobPE

Shared resources on School Laboratory Technician Archive include:

- 1. Information on keeping animals in schools
- Chemical waste treatment
- 3. Experiments
- 4. SWP, RM and MH documentation

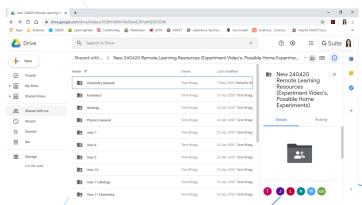
If you have any resources to share that you feel would be valuable for your fellow techs, please feel free to share and upload to the appropriate folder/s.

Remote Learning Resources Archive

If you have found a fantastic online resource or have created a video that you believe best demonstrates a scientific principal, please share on the following archive:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1PLBYHUR9vTkbEbiinlL301z6hQTzFOOW?usp=sharing

This archive was developed to allow collaboration amongst school laboratory technicians for the purpose of gathering remote learning resources that can be provided by laboratory technicians to both teachers and students.



If laboratory technicians continue to add/share resources to both these archives during and after the Covid-19 event, it will be yet another resource at our disposal when searching for answers to those unknown questions.

Thank you in advance for any contributions made to either archive.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank all those involved in creating/running the LTAV (including LTAV list) and science assist website for providing these invaluable resources for all school laboratory technicians.

# The Effect of Temperature on Membrane Permeability

Ros Clark, Melbourne High School



For the last few years we have been using The Beetroot Prac at Melbourne High School as an introduction to Unit 3 VCE Biology. We have 4 or 5 classes of Unit 3/4 Biology each year, with about half of these students in Year 11, so many students are still learning how to perform experiments and use scientific equipment. This is a simple prac where they can learn to work in teams and to understand some basic concepts of cells. This can also be further explored for the Extended Investigation, adjusting pH, time in hot water or determining more accurately the temperature at which the membrane becomes permeable.

Firstly, I slice fresh beetroot with a mandolin slicer and then create thin discs using a cork borer. This helps to get even pieces of beetroot. The discs are soaked overnight in water to remove some of the colour from broken cells. They can be left over the weekend too, but in the fridge is best.

# **Materials**

Water bottle

100 ml beaker

**Forceps** 

Test Tube Rack And 6 Test

**Toothpicks** 

White Card

Water Baths with ice, at

Tubes

**Beetroot Discs** 

Room Temperature, 40 °C,

Texta

Stopwatch

50°c, 60°c and 70°c.

Cuvettes

10 ml Measuring Cylinder

**Transfer Pipettes** 

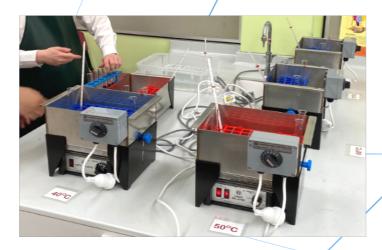
Colorimeter

# **Procedure**

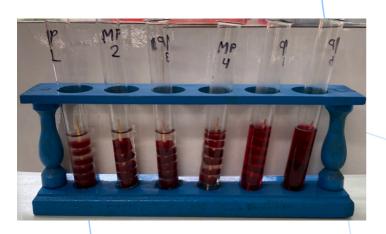
1. Collect beetroot cores from the dish provided. Thread 6 discs onto a toothpick, with space between discs, and place in a small beaker of fresh tap water. Make 6 of these beetroot "Kebabs". Change the water several times until water is no longer purple.



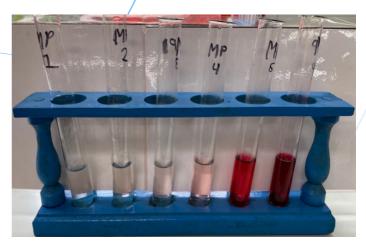
- 2. Label 6 test tubes with the texta (one for each temperature of water bath) with the temperature and your initials. Add exactly 8 ml of water to each test tube using the 10ml measuring cylinder.
- 3. Place one beetroot kebab into each test tube.
- 4. Place each tube into a different water bath and leave for 10 minutes.



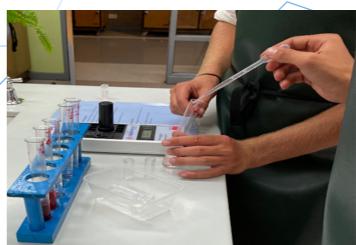
5. Collect tubes back into rack.



6. Remove Beetroot kebabs from the tubes and allow solutions to cool.



- 7. Shake the test tubes gently to make sure any pigment is well-mixed in the tube.
- 8. Take a photograph. A piece of white card behind the tubes will make this easier to see. Describe any relationship between the amount of pigment released from the beetroot and the incubation temperature.
- 9. If you have access to a colorimeter, set it to a yellow position and to measure absorbance. Collect a sample from each incubation temperature into a cuvette. Calibrate the colorimeter with water to 0.00.



10. Measure the absorbance of each tube and plot a graph of absorbance against temperature. Describe any trends or patterns in your results.

Note: Beetroot juice will stain clothing (and, temporarily, skin) but is not hazardous. Students should wear aprons to protect their clothing from stains.

# **Making Bronze**

# Lucy Gilchrist, Melba College

Last year our year 10 chemistry elective students made bronze. This was one of my favourite practicals, I actually enjoyed watching it so much that I went and signed myself up for a pottery class and a jewelry making class afterwards! I know some people would gasp at the idea of year 10s doing art in chemistry class instead of "real science" but this practical is a lot of fun, a great way to tie theory to real world applications and fits nicely into STEAM. The idea behind this comes from the book *Caveman Chemistry* by Kevin M. Dunn and essentially consists of two parts. First the students make a crucible and lid out of earthenware clay, then they use the crucible to make their bronze.

"Can't we just use regular crucibles? It'd be a lot less work?" Unfortunately, no, regular crucibles are glazed and firing them at the temperatures required for the bronze will melt the glaze, sealing shut the lid. Plus, it makes it that much more exciting for students to use a crucible they made themselves.

# **Making the Crucible**

This part is fairly easy to set up but a lot of work to clean up!

- Cut the earthenware clay into cubes approximately 6cm x 6cm x 6 cm and store in freezer bags to keep fresh. If you are not familiar with working with clay, the trick here is to use a piece of fishing wire to cut. It'll slide straight through, giving you a much cleaner cut than trying to use a knife.
- 2. It might be worth using some plastic art aprons instead of lab coats for this one.
- 3. The crucible uses a pinch pot technique. Students will remove a bit of their cube to form a lid, then roll the rest of the clay into a ball shape. Then they essentially stick their thumb into the clay and start pinching all the way around until the walls are about 1cm thick.
- 4. Make sure that the crucibles can stand, some students chose to add an extra stand to the bottom of theirs.
- 5. Students can carve their name into the pot and lid with a toothpick.





- 6. Make sure to remind students not to let the clay go down the drain.
- 7. Once the crucibles are done, leave them to dry for a week. When they are fully dry, they then need to be bisque fired. If you happen to be lucky enough to have an art department with a kiln this part is easy, otherwise there are a few ceramics studios around that will fire it at around a cost of \$9-10 a kilo. The ceramics studio looked at me pretty funny when I said these were year 10s work, I had to explain that they are science students and that no our art department wasn't terrible!

# **Making the Bronze**

Now comes the best bit! With the crucibles back from the kiln it is time to make the bronze.

- 1. The bronze requires a mix of copper carbonate and tin oxide. Dehydrated sodium carbonate is also used as a flux.
- 2. There is no correct ratio of copper to tin. The more tin you add the harder the metal will be, while more copper will produce more of that distinctive bronze colour. There is also no set amount of sodium carbonate either. We use 6g sodium carbonate, 10g copper carbonate and 2g tin oxide, which I weigh out and mix myself but there is no reason you couldn't experiment with this and have different students use different compositions.
- 3. The mix is added to the crucible, then covered with charcoal as a reducing agent. The students used a mortar and pestle to grind the charcoal (wearing dust masks of course) but the

- caveman chemistry book also recommends using dried corn as a less messy alternative.
- 4. The crucibles is then kiln fired to earthenware. The kiln needs to get up to a temperature of 1050°C but the heat doesn't need to be sustained for as long as pottery. About 20 minutes at max temperature is enough, longer and the bronze will be almost impossible to get out without breaking the crucible.



- The result is a solid mess of charcoal, copper and tin. Students will need to use a screwdriver to dig through this until they find a small 5-10 cent piece sized nugget of bronze.
- 6. We are lucky enough to have a rock tumbler that gets used to polish the nugget, but sandpaper is fine too.

# A Week in the Life of a Lab Tech...

# Leonie Leishman, Cranbourne East Secondary College

----Original Message-----

From: List < list-bounces@ltav.org.au > On Behalf Of Leishman, Leonie L via

List

Sent: Sunday, 19 April 2020 9:21 AM

To: list@ltav.org.au

Subject: Re: [LTAVlist] self-care working from home

SO......none of the listed work station ergonomics will work for me

SO.....just like school I will stand at the bench to work on the computer (laptop).

Walk around every 20 mins, will make my day so long as I am so easily distracted and short walk around the bench will mean another cuppa and probably another biscuit and then I will wonder what I was actually doing and walk to a different room before I remember, and go back to the bench to work.

Suggestions for 20 min breaks:

Hang out washing, Bring in washing

Make a cuppa (safe to do so - no chemicals, other than the accumulation under the kitchen sink)

### EAT!!

Change from slippers to runners Change from runners to thongs

Prepare tea @ 9.00am Change out of PJ's around lunch time Lunchtime, put the roast on Afternoon breaks - check the roast

Makes life interesting Cheers

Leonie









Please read this and hum along to - WHITE ROOM by CREAM

In the prep room with no curtains near the car park Black roof country, no gold pavements, tired starlings Silver horses, run down moonbeams in my daydreams

Papers piled up in the kitchen, not the lab bench

I'll wait in this place where the sun never shines Wait in this place where the shadows run from themselves

You said no safety could secure you at the lab door Only the skeleton, safe from CoVID, waits at the window I work hard from home, drinking way too much coffee

As I walked out, felt my own need just beginning

I'll wait in my PJ's, till the kids all come back

Just wait here at home, where the shadows run from themselves

At the start it was easy, this working from home All the hard work, from term 1, now forgotten The lab coats have new collars and the SDS are updated

Just the technician, from the back room
I'll stay in this place, still working from home.
work in the dark where the shadows run from themselves.







# ...In Isolation!

# Janelle Gehling, Braemar College

"During the holidays I experimented with my first ever attempt at home made sourdough bread. It was the best bread I have ever tasted, but I might be biased.

Next is Kombucha, just have to obtain a SCOBY from somewhere, my last attempt to grow my own from scratch didn't go as well as I had hoped."







# Paul Thomas, Wangaratta High School

"I was able to grab a photo as I worked away in the physics space. So much equipment stored away, beautifully catalogued on the stocktake sheet but basically unused and mysterious. It's like going back 50 years!"



Fresh batch of hand sanitiser.

# Deborah Sun, Waverley Christian College



The home lab!







# Melbourne High School

Ros Clark,

Caring for the stick insects.



Yeast respiration at home.





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MTA site. For example **1002034** will become **SER1002034**.



# **POSITION VACANT**

# Regional Liaison Officer (Country regions)

# Therese Graham

This role has more recently been split over two areas statewide – Regional and Metropolitan. The seat that is being vacated is the Regional (Country) role.

A Regional Liaison Officer (RLO) is appointed by LTAV Committee to facilitate communication between the Committee and LTAV Regional Representatives.

"The Regional Liaison Officer:

i. Shall be the first point of contact between the regional representatives and the committee.

ii. Shall assist regional representatives in arranging regional activity funding.

iii. Shall advise the committee on regional matters.

iv. Shall chair an annual meeting of regional representatives in conjunction with LABCON"

(The above has been taken directly from the LTAV policy documents)

Generally, I have viewed the RLO role as a conduit between the LTAV committee and the wider membership – somewhat a spokesperson for the further reaches of the Laboratory Technician network in Victoria through communications with the Regional Representatives.

Minor changes have occurred to the role during the years I have held the seat warm ... a regional professional development fund which is administered (in trust) by the Regional Representatives as they require of \$500 per region per year – very generously supported by committee. This can be increased on application to the committee and will be assessed on the merit of the value to members. Many of the regions have organised their own network meetings and used the funding to support costs and providing catering for these events.

A report to committee is constructed by the RLO after communication with the Regional Representatives. This is then presented to committee at the periodical meetings – usually one each term, and a couple extra as planning and consolidation for LABCON is required.

Each of the Representatives, of "active" regions, are now supported to attend the annual LABCON event with either the registration costs or the same value of accommodation and travel expenses, in return for attending a Regional Representatives get together (Triple RRR Regional Reps Rage) as one of the required workshop sessions to be participated at in return for the financial support.

Committee members generally would attempt to participate at Regional network meetings, if enough notice is given, to support and enhance the LTAV membership, along with presenting sessions, dependant on demand. RR just need to make contact.

There are many opportunities that the role of RLO has afforded me. I have been pleased to have participated at many regional events and was supported in attending CONASTA in Brisbane July 2016.

The LTAV committee is a dynamic group of Laboratory Technicians who understand and work in the same settings as you, so we are always bringing our lived examples of the school environment to a collective table. It is now time for me to pass on this role to someone else to enjoy the collegiality that I have experienced. My time as a RLO (Regional Liaison Officer) has been rewarding ~ a little overwhelming at times at the beginning, but I have had the opportunity to gently tweak the role. As always, there are more unfinished tasks to do and I am happy to take a back seat and help someone else to shape it for their own. I have been trying to tidy up my electronically gathered information for safe keeping on a USB ready to pass on. Being an Education Support Officer in a Laboratory Technician capacity puts us indeed into a 'class of our own'.

Please email Therese Graham:

TGraham@cathedralcollege.vic.edu.au for more information if you are interested in taking on the role.

Please note that regional representative positions for the Geelong and Mornington regions are currently vacant also.

# Lab Tech

# **LTAV Committee**

### Geoff Gleadall - LTAV President

The School/Institution which you currently service:

Moneterey Secondary College

Years at current workplace: 10

Years as a lab tech:

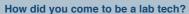
Over 45 (February 1974)

What qualifications/degrees do you have?

Diploma of Applied Science

Is there a particular discipline of science that you take interest in or have expertise in?

Chemistry but comfortable in all of them



Needed a workplace that could cope with my absence for several weeks at short notice

What did you do before you were a lab tech?

Soldier

What's your favourite thing about being a lab tech?

The variety of work is good, but after all this time, the pain in my feet is winning over the variety

If you could give your younger, brand-new-just-starting-out lab tech self some advice, what would it be?

Don't let yourself be exploited!

If you weren't a lab tech right now, what would you be doing?
I would be retired

What does 'life outside the lab' look like for you? E.g. Family, hobbies, pets!

I run a small business, I have been a member of the Victoria Police Historical Society for many years, I am the president of the Victorian Colonial Infantry Association, I am active with CPSU, I sing in a choir (Bass), I have a large family including three adult daughters, and when I have some spare time I even occasionally get up in the mountains hunting.

# Jessica Boys – General Committee (& previous Lablines editor!)

The School/Institution which you currently service:

Officer Secondary College

Years at current workplace: 4

Years as a lab tech: 7



What qualifications/degrees do you have?

Bachelor of Biomedical Science, Deakin University

Bachelor of Biomedical Science Honours, Monash University

Is there a particular discipline of science that you take interest in or have expertise in?

LOVE Biology. From my very first Biology class in Year 11, I was hooked.

### How did you come to be a lab tech?

I was heading towards medical research. After I had finished my honours degree, I reflected back on the year. It surprised me to discover that my favourite part was the day a group of secondary students visited the lab and we got to teach them some scientific techniques. I realised I was in the wrong job. I contacted a past school teacher who had, earlier in my life, suggested that I become a school lab tech. He put me in touch with an extraordinary school lab tech, Marcia Rogerson. I am forever indebted to her for her mentorship. Seven years on and I have never looked back.

What did you do before you were a lab tech?

I was a student, at school and then Uni.

### What's your favourite thing about being a lab tech?

It's just the perfect blend. You're telling me that I get to manage a lab, whilst remaining incredibly social AND sometimes I even get to lead demonstrations in classes? Are you kidding me? What magical job is this? It's also a fantastic outlet for me in my OCD... neat trolleys, straight labels. Sigh. Paradise.

If you could give your younger, brand-new-just-starting-out lab tech self some advice, what would it be?

Some advice I received from Marcia Rogerson in my early years:

- 1. Go all out in your first year at a school. Wow them.
- 2. Your Science teachers are your team.
- 3. Make friends with your maintenance guy.

If you weren't a lab tech right now, what would you be doing? Still looking for my dream job.

What does 'life outside the lab' look like for you? E.g. Family, hobbies, pets!

It's me, my amazing husband and our two hilarious rabbits. I don't have any remarkable secret talents or skills. In my spare time you can find me doing the puzzles in the Sun, colouring and spending far too much time on Netflix and Stan. We also run some kids holiday programs with our church, which are a blast and take up a lot of our headspace.

# Get-to-Know-Me!

# **LTAV Members**

## Miranda Ford - Oxley College

Years at current workplace:

Four (time flies when you're enjoying it)

Years as a lab tech:

15 (WOW that flew by)

What qualifications/degrees do you have?

Bachelor of Science, Macquarie University

Is there a particular discipline of science that you take interest in or have expertise in?

My degree majored in Biology, in particular Genetics

How did you come to be a lab tech?

I love Science and I had the degree, it was just a matter of finding the perfect job. And I did.

What did you do before you were a lab tech?

Worked in retail, last job being in Woolies delj/in Mornington

What's your favourite thing about being a lab tech?

Every day is different, the work is enjoyable and my colleagues are great

If you could give your younger, brand-new-just-starting-out lab tech self some advice, what would it be?

Join the lab tech email list, buy all the lab tech manuals you can, and make sure you have copies of all the text books! Oh, and you don't always have to say YES!

If you weren't a lab tech right now, what would you be doing?

Possibly working in Forensics with the police force

What does 'life outside the lab' look like for you? E.g. Family, hobbies, pets!

I have a partner Kristian, two rambunctious dogs Simba and Diesel, two cats Jaffa and Zeus, two bearded dragons Harry and one as yet unnamed, and a bub on the way. Favourite hobby is geocaching!



# Linda Pegler - Red Cliffs Secondary College

Years at current workplace:

31 years (wow that's a long time)

Years as a lab tech:

37 years

What qualifications/degrees do you have?

Cert IV in Laboratory Skills (almost completed)

Is there a particular discipline of science that you take interest in or have expertise in?

Biology

How did you come to be a lab tech?

First job I had when I left school, in an industrial lab in Sydney. Big company, Ciba Geigy

What did you do before you were a lab tech?

Telephone sales selling chemicals and equipment, Clerk at Yellow pages

What's your favourite thing about being a lab tech?

Trying out new pracs and training new graduate teachers.

If you could give your younger, brand-new-just-starting-out lab tech self some advice, what would it be?

Always keep on top of the washing up and don't be afraid to ask questions.

If you weren't a lab tech right now, what would you be doing?

Retired. This will be a reality at the end of this year (2020).

What does 'life outside the lab' look like for you? E.g. Family, hobbies, pets!

Family, cooking, sewing, gardening and travel.3



# Welcome to the Wonderful World of Waste and the School Laboratory

Photo by: Chromatograph on Unsplash

# Michael Pola, Envirostore Chemical Consulting

Part IX

## mike@envirostore.com.au

This quarter's article looks at spills and mishaps in the school laboratory. I was prompted due to a recent small collection from a school which had experienced a chemical spill (formalin solution) and they had called the Fire Brigade. There was no fire involved. Apparently, there were a number of their large vehicles and associated crew in the street for a spill comprising about 5 litres. A similar incident years ago from the same suburb involved a dropped vial of bromine. Again, the lab technician panicked when confronted by the brown swirling fumes of bromine and called the MFB in. We came in to collect the result of their clean-up which consisted of a 5 mL broken glass vial wrapped nicely in a large plastic bag contained within a 240-litre orange recovery drum. Some may say overkill, some may not say this at all. In both incidents the MFB did not remove the spilled items, they only attempted to make safe by containing the chemical involved.

Lessons to be learnt from these two incidents and some questions asked and few comments made would include the following, in no particular order:

- The MFB are not really geared for small chemical spills especially in a school lab. All their emergency vehicles are large fully equipped Hazmat trucks and they are ready for anything. Sometimes there is a cost involved and it will be brutal.
- In both incidents, the lab technician preferred to call in an outside body to deal with the spill, when good laboratory management and practice would strongly suggest that a spill kit in the lab would have dealt with both spills in a jiffy.
- 3. Bromine is an evil looking brown fuming liquid and would look menacing if a vial was dropped at your feet and brown fumes started coming towards you. Five minutes after the spill no trace would exist as bromine turns from liquid to vapour very quickly and soon dissipates.
- 4. Formalin is a solution of formaldehyde in water and has a fairly obnoxious aroma to my sensitive nose anyway. Its reputation as a potential human carcinogen lead to alternatives to be sought. Glutaraldehyde (C5H8O2) was for a while suggested as an alternative solution for disinfection, preserving and fixing but apparently it is much more toxic than formaldehyde and is also a probable human carcinogen. In the school lab. formalin is what is probably used as the preservative for the sealed zoological specimens. (Ethanol also, sometimes both).
- 5. One of your risk controls when using any dangerous good (both bromine and formaldehyde are class 8) is to have an effective spill control in place. This would come under the Administrative controls. Remember when going through your risk controls to start at the top with Elimination, and proceed down the controls list in order, finishing up with Personal Protection Equipment (PPE).
- 6. When doing your risk assessment (which leads to the Risk Controls), we strongly suggest you make yourself familiar with all the chemicals you will be dealing with. The properties of both bromine (i.e. a brown corrosive volatile liquid) and formaldehyde would or should have prompted some extra thought given to the spill controls. Bromine spills



are effectively treated using lime, (calcium hydroxide not calcium oxide) to both neutralise and absorb. Formaldehyde is effectively soaked up with our good friend vermiculite or any other mineral based absorbent; you could also use it on the bromine.

- 7. On the Envirostore website, in the 'For Schools' section, you will find an information sheet on spill kits which has some more information on spill kit make up. Putting together a spill kit for the school laboratory is as simple of using vermiculite or similar, having it is a labelled container such as a 20-litre plastic pail and having a few at convenient locations in the prep room, store and lab. For corrosive spill kits throw in some soda ash for acid spills or sodium acid sulphate for alkaline spills in with the vermiculite.
- 8. The best neutraliser for ammonia solutions is citric acid either as is or with the vermiculite.
- 9. Solid spills are best swept up and put into a heavy-duty plastic bag, contained in a pail and labelled. This is prescribed chemical waste, as is a liquid spill that has been soaked up and you therefore need to have spill kit wastes disposed of by your waste disposal company.
- 10. Do not use sand as an absorbent, or soil or sawdust. None of these are effective and, in some cases, you can get a chemical reaction when using on certain nasty chemicals like nitric acid for example.
- 11. If you consult a Safety Data Sheet for information and advice on dealing with a chemical spill, prepare to be disappointed and disheartened. It is the rare SDS that actually has any information of a useful nature regarding a chemical spill. The suggestion to ring your local authority (I suppose the EPA) is of little use when you have a room filling with fumes and smoke or some pool of liquid is fizzing in a corner of the lab and eating its way through the floor to China while you frantically flip over pages of the SDS seeking some guidance. Get in first and get the spill kit organised before you start.

If you have any questions dealing with chemical spills or splashes, we at Envirostore are happy to help so feel free to contact us. (We won't tell you to ring the EPA). If you have any comments both good and critical you can contact me or the editor of Lablines, Sam Gunning.

# Don't worry, we've seen worse\*

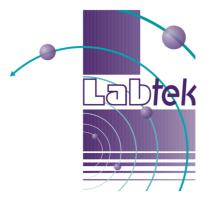


The Envirostore.com.au web site has a special "For Schools" section where you will find some handy downloadable materials addressing spills, banned chemicals, the GHS and more and you can enter details of your chemical waste on line for a disposal quote. Michael Pola's Labcon and STAV presentations for 2018 are also available

Don't forget we can supply compliant containers for consolidating your liquid chemical wastes, and we pack all the chemicals for disposal ourselves and we will take everything. We are happy to have a look at your lab, prep room and store and offer suggestions on compliance and good lab practices – this is a free service for our customers. We also supply economical and effective spill kits and free chemical advice.

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# Want to feature in Lablines?

# Of course you do!

Lablines is made so enjoyable to read because of the contributions from our readers and the wider lab tech community – you guys!

We are always open to submissions and ideas! If you are interested in creating a submission for articles such as:

- Telling us about a successful or fun prac you have done
- A week in the life of a lab tech.
- Lab tech get-to-know-me
- Lab animals
- Reporting on your school's science fair or STEM week
- Sharing insight on a science-related topic that you're interested in and would like to educate your fellow lab techs on
- A funny story from your time in the lab
- Thank you, you are awesome!
- An advice article for fellow techs with tips and tricks (maybe some general 'hacks', or maybe how you master a notoriously difficult prac)
- Recommendations/reviews of a science related TV show/documentary you've watched, podcasts you've listened to etc.

Or... you name it!). If it's related to our work and you think it would be an interesting read in Lablines, we'd love to hear about it.

Please email editor Samantha Gunning at s.gunning@braemar.vic.edu.au

We are also open to general ideas and suggestions - perhaps there's an article you'd like to request, or an idea you have for a regular segment.

Send them on through!

# What are You Listening to?

Podcasts and radio shows are great to turn up on your drive home, or maybe even have on in the background as you're working away in the lab. Check out where your fellow lab techs are getting their dose of scientific (and sometimes equally comedic) talk!

# Ellen Clarke, ACU:

"Hubby and I love podcasts while travelling. Here are some we like:"

60 Second Science

https://www.scientificamerican.com/podcast/60-second-science/

Science in Action

https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p002vsnb

Dr Karl on Triple J

https://www.abc.net.au/triplei/dr-karl/

The Infinite Monkey Cage

<u> https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00snr0w/episodes/downloads</u>

The naked Scientists

https://www.thenakedscientists.com/podcasts/naked-scientists-podcast

Great moments in Science

https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/greatmomentsinscience/

Suzanne Thornley, Mentone Girls Secondary College:

"I love 'The Infinite Monkey Cage' with Brian Cox (Podcast)."



Email: harvey@principlespractice.com.au, Phone: 0459 768 392



# 24 -28 AUGUST 2020

# Science Technician Appreciation & Recognition week





# **#STARweek**

STARweek is an opportunity for schools to appreciate and recognise the professional support, invaluable knowledge and experience that science technicians contribute to your school.









During the week 24- 28 August 2020 schools across Australia are encouraged to celebrate the work that science technicians perform to support practical science in schools.

Share stories and images of your school's science technicians by posting with **#STARweek20** 









SETA are proud to announce that MTA have donated \$2000 in sponsorship money for 2 lucky winners to attend CONASTA 69.

The winners will receive \$1000 each, this money must be used for Flights, Accommodation or Registration fees to attend CONASTA 69 in Canberra 2021.

CONASTA 69 is hosted by Science Educators Association of the ACT (SEA\*ACT) and held in **July** in Canberra.



Entering is easy, if you are already a member of your State Association, simply email **Julie.carey@education.wa.edu.au** describing in 50 words or less why you'd like to attend CONASTA. Please include your name, email address, school and your state association that you are a member of to be included in the competition.



That's easy just contact your state association and sign up to be eligible to enter. Visit seta.edu.au/state-associations for a link to your State Association.

### Conditions of entry:

- The promotor of this Competition is Science Education Technicians Australia (SETA)
- The winners will be selected by SETA
- The Promoter's decision is final and the Promoter will not enter into correspondence regarding the promotion result
- The prize of this competition has been supplied by Modern Teaching
- To be in the competition you must be a current member of your state or territory lab technician 'organisation' or Association
- Winners must be available for promotional photos
- The sponsorship money can only be spent on Travel, Accommodation or Registration to attend CONASTA 69
- The winners must attend CONASTA 69

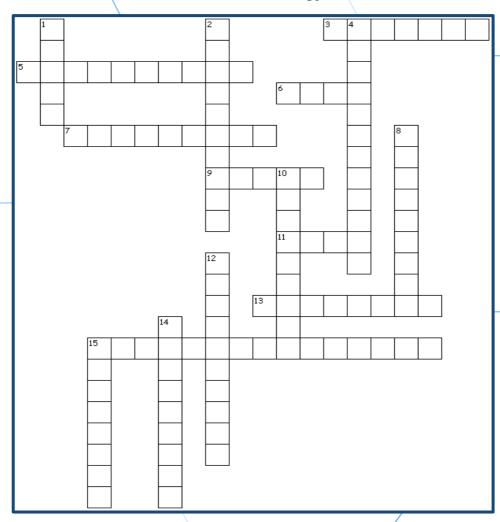
- The winners must attend the MTA booth at CONASTA 69 for a meet and greet with the sponsor, and be available for a photo opportunity that may be used for promotional purposes.
- The winners will be required to write an article about their experience at CONASTA 69 which will be available for publication in every state/territory newsletter
- Sponsorships cannot be converted to cash
- There will be two winners, each receiving the value \$1000 each
- Most creative responses win, as decided by our judges
- Judge's decision is final
- The closing date for entry is Friday 31st July
- Winners will be decided on Friday 14th August
- Winners will be notified by email on Monday 24th August

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# **Brain Break**

# **Crossword - Microbiology Edition!**



### **Across**

- 3. Needing oxygen
- 5. An organism that has a simple cell structure without a membrane bound 2. A chemical that kills or inhibits the growth of bacteria and is used to treat nucleus or organelles.
- 6. A dried hydrophilic, colloidal substance extracted from red algae species, used as a solid culture media for bacteria and other microorganisms.
- 7. An organism that thrives, or at least which can survive in a saline environment.
- 9. Any substance that is poisonous to other organisms.
- 11. The basic unit of all living things.
- 13. An organism that causes disease.
- 15. The production of light in living organisms by the enzyme luciferase.

### **Down**

- 1. An infectious particle that relies on the cellular machinery of the host cell to grow and replicate.
- bacterial infections.
- 4. A microbe that positively thrives in environments that would kill other organisms.
- 8. A single-celled or multicellular organism which has a true membranebound nucleus and membrane bound organelles.
- 10. To treat a medium with micro-organisms for the purpose of creating a favorable response.
- 12. The name given to some fungi and soil bacteria that break down dead animals and plants and their waste products into simpler substances called nutrients.
- 14. A long thin appendage present on the surface of some cells such as bacteria and protoctista which enables them to move.
- 15. Very small single-celled organisms with no nucleus

1. Fiction 2. Fiction 2. Fiction 2. Fiction 2. Fiction 5. Fiction 5. Fiction 5. Fiction 5. Fiction 7. Fact 8. Fact

# **Fact or Fiction?**

1. A hologram shows two dimensions.

Fact/Fiction?

2. Mycodiesel is a fuel made from grass.

Fact/Fiction?

3. The mass of a cube is measured by density and volume.

Fact/Fiction?

A carbon atom is lighter than a hydrogen atom.

Fact/Fiction?

5. An anthelion is a kind of insect.

Fact/Fiction?

6. A human body gives off about as much heat as an automobile engine.

Fact/Fiction?

7. The first bicycles did not have pedals.

Fact/Fiction?

8. Babies have about 100 more bones than

Fact/Fiction?

# You Argon-na be Laughing!

Q: What do you call an educated measuring tube?

A: A graduated

cylinder!

**Q:** What's the deal for buying one electron and one proton?

A: You get one neutron

- free of charge

Q: What should you do when no one laughs at your chemistry jokes?A: Keep trying until you get a reaction!

# Did You Know?

## It takes 8 minutes, 19 seconds for light to travel from the Sun to the Earth

In space, light travels at 300,000 kilometres (186,000 miles) per second. Even at this breakneck speed, covering the 150 million odd kilometres (93 million miles) between us and the Sun takes considerable time. And eight minutes is still very little compared to the five and a half hours it takes for the Sun's light to reach Pluto.



Conditionaire is now offering more than just Fume Cupboard/Fume Hood/Ductless Fume Cupboard solutions for your School/Company/Research Facility/University etc. We are now in association with two other companies: Validair Sciences and Biosafety. For peace of mind, we are a Nata Accredited Company, so we get all our staff and equipment audited annually. Because of this, our reporting/results, as per the standards, must reference the correct AS/NZS 2014.8-2014 and include a photo/sketch, which is required on the reports as well. Science ASSIST reiterates/recommends using a Nata Accredited Company for testing/servicing.

Website Address https://assist.asta.edu.au/

Why are we associating with two other companies you may ask? Very simple; to help our existing and new clients have one Contractor who can provide expertise in three main fields:

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We have experience in dealing with all models of Fume Cupboards that are on the current market today and most past makes/models. We can offer you original parts on your current makes/models or retro fit ours onto whatever make/model you have if those parts are not available or don't exist anymore, or you simply don't like the existing control/operating system that is already in place. This is a huge advantage over all our competitors, as most cannot do this. All associated companies have full accreditation in their respective fields. I have also presented a list of other services that are available to all our clients and new clients....and we now have access through an online portal for all our clients to see or gather their test reports and have a full asset history on their fume cupboards etc including comments/repairs...but...there will be even more capabilities coming in the future!

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www.ltav.org.au

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# **LTAV PUBLICATIONS 2020**

The following laboratory reference manuals are available from LTAV:

BIOLOGY REFERENCE MANUAL, 2013: \$35.00 for digital [USB] and black & white hard copy combination.

This REVISED handbook contains information on biological techniques, reagents, stains and culture media commonly used in secondary schools. Dale Carroll, Ritva Fazio, Sarah Daniele and Wendy Hurle have updated the earlier version by Dale Carroll, Ritva Fazio, Jeannene Bradbury and Marg Rubans of the original authors of: Jenny Kopsidas, Rita Poole, Jean Stokes and Maya Wagner.

**PHYSICS REFERENCE MANUAL, 2013:** \$35.00 for digital [USB] and black & white hard copy combination. Svetlana Machouba has made many updates to the earlier version by Sabino Del Balso and Valerie Clements.

CHEMISTRY: A REFERENCE MANUAL FOR LABORATORY TECHNICIANS, 2008 by Geoff Gleadall (Dip.App.Sci.):

\$35.00 for digital [USB] and black & white hard copy combination. A comprehensive guide for the beginning and experienced Laboratory Technician in all aspects of the chemistry laboratory.

LABORATORY MANAGEMENT DATABASES by Geoff Gleadall Dip.App.Sci. [Digital - USB], Version 2, 2009: \$35.00

### LTAV PUBLICATIONS TAX INVOICE & ORDER FORM

ABN 96 439 156 002

Phone / Fax: Email:			
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Biology Ref Manual 2013 Digital [USB] + Hard copy	\$35.00		
Physics Ref Manual 2013 Digital [USB] + Hard copy	\$35.00		
Chemistry: a Ref Manual for Lab Technicians 2008 Digital [USB] + Hard copy	\$35.00		
Laboratory Management Databases 2009 Digital [USB]	\$35.00		
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publications@ltav.org.au						



# **Membership Information**

ABN: 96 439 156 002

**Membership is a calendar year** - 1st January 2020 to 31st December 2020, regardless of when the membership fee is paid.

**LTAV membership belongs to you, the Lab Tech** and not the school. If you leave your school, you take your membership with you. LTAV membership is not transferable.

**If you haven't been a member previously**, you need to fill in an Application for Membership form found at <a href="mailto:www.ltav.org.au">www.ltav.org.au</a> under 'membership' OR email <a href="mailto:membership@ltav.org.au">membership@ltav.org.au</a> and ask for a form. Lab Techs in their first year of employment in education are eligible for free membership.

To renew your membership or to register for the first time there are two options:

- **1.** Go to <u>www.ltav.org.au</u> and under 'membership' click on '2020 renewal'. You have the choice of requesting an invoice (which is automatically sent to your email address) or paying straight away via credit card.
- 2. Fill in the 2020 LTAV MEMBERSHIP TAX INVOICE form which you will find in Lablines and on the LTAV website. This form needs to be emailed to <a href="mailto:membership@ltav.org.au">membership@ltav.org.au</a> or mailed. If you mail the form, please be aware that it can take up to a month to finally reach the membership officer.

### **Payment options**

- 1. As mentioned above you can pay online via credit card
- 2. You can pay directly into the LTAV bank account (details are on the tax invoices)
- 3. Cheques can be mailed to the LTAV post box (see the letter head for address)
- 4. Cash can be given directly to the membership officer

If your school is paying your membership, you need to give your accounts department the tax invoice, either the one you receive via email OR the 2020 LTAV membership tax invoice form you filled in and sent to the membership email address.

**LTAV members receive 4 issues of Lablines**, our fantastic magazine, per year. Your issue is posted just before the end of each term. The first issue is posted to all members from the previous year as a courtesy because membership payment isn't due until April 30th and the first issue goes out before then. It is important to note that although membership payment can be made any time during the membership year, you may miss out on some issues of Lablines if you pay after April 30th. The reason for this is that when Lablines goes to print, the number ordered is based on the number of members at the time, including renewals received without payment, plus about 20 extra copies.

2019 has been a fantastic year with record numbers of Lab Techs getting behind their association and taking out membership. If you have not joined LTAV yet, now is the time to do it and make our association even stronger. LABCON registration is much cheaper if you are a member with the difference in cost for a non-member being more than the actual \$44 cost of annual membership fee.

Any questions or comments please send an email to <a href="mailto:membership@ltav.org.au">membership@ltav.org.au</a>



By Lab Technicians for Lab Technicians S3/159 Burwood Road Suite 150 **Hawthorn VIC 3122** www.ltav.org.au

# 2020 LTAV MEMBERSHIP TAX INVOICE

ABN: 96 439 156 002

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Members are always welcome at committee meetings. Contact any committee member for more information.