



Victorian Branch

Annual Report 2019

(amended 16 Feb 2021)

Welcome

This year the Victorian Branch is moving to an annual report in order to present our achievements, performance and plans for the future. In this new format you will find details of our events from 2019, membership statistics, financial performance, who your council members were, and much more. We hope that you enjoy this new format and insight into your Branch's activities.



Thank you to all members who attended our 2019 events - we hope to see you at our 2020 events too. Our event planning occurs throughout the year. If there are any particular events, workshops, or topics that you would like to see, please get in touch with us at vic.branch@statsoc.org.au with your ideas.

Ben Harrap,
Secretary

Acknowledgement of country

The Victorian Branch of the Statistical Society of Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

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Words from the President

The past year has seen many changes for our Branch. You may have noticed some of these, but many have been 'under the hood'. We were guided by a strategic plan that was developed over a process spanning many months, starting back in Nov 2018. Our strategic goals, which are summarised on page 4, are focused around four key areas:

- Membership
- Activities
- Communications
- Operations

We made progress on each of these and look forward to improving further still in the coming year.

Our year in brief

Our Branch membership grew substantially across 2019, reaching a total of 278 by the end of the year. We have been actively tracking this at our monthly Council meetings and are pleased to see that our initiatives to recruit and welcome new members is bearing fruit. A full membership report is included on page 6.

One of the more visible changes was a greater focus on **diversity** in our events. This included hosting more of our events outside our traditional home at the University of Melbourne, as well as trying out some new event formats and times. A notable example was our mentoring breakfast (see page 9). We had a target of 50% female presenters across our events, which I am delighted to say that we achieved. For the Belz Lecture, we invited a senior industry leader, **Antony Ugoni**, who spoke about the important role that statistics has to play in a commercial data science context (see page 8).

As in past years, we made a special effort to encourage our Young Statisticians. We supported six PhD students to attend the Young Statisticians Conference (YSC 2019) in Canberra, some of whom also made an appearance at our Young Statisticians Showcase (see page 7).

Member highlights

Many of our members have been particularly active within our Society at a national level. I would like to highlight some of them:

- **Julie Simpson** completed her final year on the SSA Accreditation Committee in Feb 2019, we thank her for serving 5 years in this important role.



- **Sabine Braat** is co-chair of the Biostatistics and Bioinformatics Section.
- **Karen Lamb** initiated the Biostatistics and Bioinformatics Mentoring pilot and is also co-chairing the Scientific Program Committee for our 2022 conference.
- **Jessica Kasza** served on the SSA Executive Committee as the Branches' Representative and is now the SSA Vice-President.
- **Janan Arslan, Myra McGuinness, Sharmala Thuraisingam** and **Ratih Putri Pertiwi** were on the Organising Committee for YSC 2019.

I also wish to highlight the following members' successes:

- **Alison Harcourt**, whose achievements we celebrated in our previous annual report, deserves another special mention. In 2019 she was named an Officer of the Order of Australia. Well done, Alison!
- **David Balding** was elected a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science.
- **Tim Brown** commenced as Director of the Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute (AMSI).

Finally, and most importantly, I acknowledge the dedication and enthusiasm of our Council members and volunteers (see page 5). They are the ones that make our events tick along and a delight to attend. Thank you for your energy and creativity in crafting our activities this past year and working through our many 'under the hood' operational changes.

I am delighted to see that we have attracted a diverse group of new volunteers keen to get in on the act in 2020. We have a bright new year to look forward to.

Sponsors

We are grateful for the following institutions who have provided us with financial or in-kind support throughout the year:

- Bunnings
- Eliiza
- Monash University
- University of Melbourne

Damjan Vukcevic,
President

About us

The Victorian Branch of the Statistical Society of Australia (SSA Vic) is a professional association representing statisticians in Victoria and Tasmania. We were founded in 1964. We are one of six state branches of the Statistical Society of Australia, which was founded in 1962.

Purpose

SSA Vic enables statisticians to make an impact on Victorian community and industry by supporting them over the life of their careers and raising awareness of their vital contributions to public discussion. We provide a link between our members and broader national statistical activities.

Principles

- Our core membership comprises those that identify as statisticians
- We recruit and retain students, early, mid and senior career statisticians
- We draw on the skills and knowledge of our members in order to maximise our impact
- We offer a diverse range of activities and resources in order to be inclusive of all statisticians
- We make thoughtful and efficient use of volunteer contributions

Goals for 2019 & 2020



Our people

Council

Damjan Vukcevic, President

Jessica Kasza, Vice-President

Ben Harrap, Secretary

Geoff Adams, Treasurer

Luke Prendergast, Membership Officer 1

Rheanna Mainzer, Membership Officer 2

Georgia Tsambos, Young Statisticians' Representative

Patrick Robotham, Industry Representative

Julie Simpson, Newsletter Officer

Volunteers

Elizabeth Korevaar

Hien Nguyen

Strategy Committee

Ben Harrap

Elizabeth Korevaar

Hien Nguyen

Damjan Vukcevic

Advisory Committee

Sandy Clarke-Errey

Ian Gordon

Lyle Gurrin

Michael Phillips

Auditor

Daryl Daley

Membership report

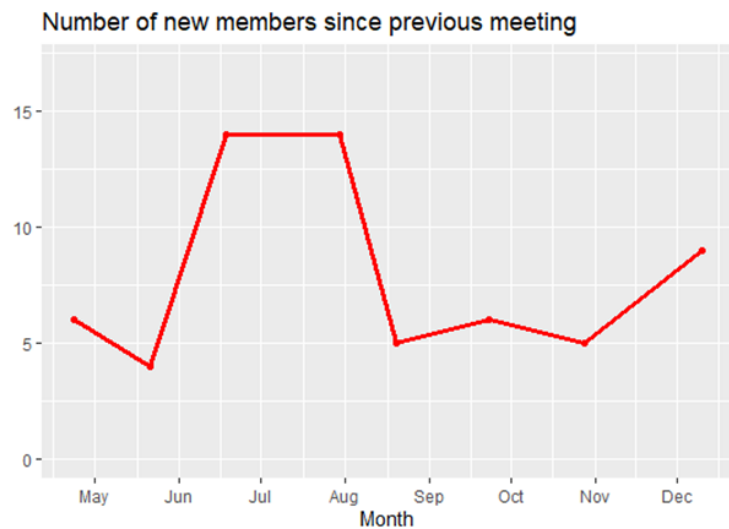
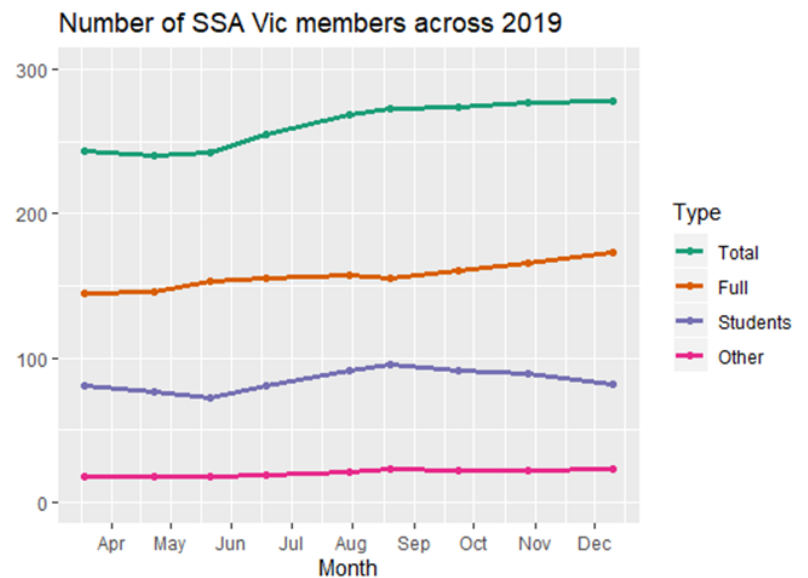
In 2019 the number of SSA Vic members increased from 244 in March, to 278 in December, with a total of 63 new members joining our Branch. Most of this growth was due to an increase in full memberships. Student memberships peaked in August but returned to their original level towards the end of 2019.



We ran several initiatives throughout the year to enhance the value of membership, including a mentoring breakfast in June that was exclusive to members, discounts on R and Python workshops in November, and a free drink for members at several post-seminar social events. We also ran a recruitment drive for senior statisticians late in the year.

At the end of 2019 our Branch consisted of 173 full members, 82 student members, and 23 members in other categories (retired, transitional or honorary).

Rheanna Mainzer,
Membership Officer



Young Statisticians

Every year we like to provide support and recognition for our Young Statisticians.

In 2019, we provided a total of \$1500 in financial support to the following PhD students to attend YSC 2019:

- Jiadong Mao
- Ravindi Nanayakkara
- Ruoxu Tan
- Duyet Tran
- Rushani Wijesuriya
- Udani Wijewardhana

We also held our traditional Young Statisticians Showcase event in September, where three of these students presented their projects to us.



Jiadong Mao, Ravindi Nanayakkara and Rushani Wijesuriya presenting at the Young Statisticians Showcase

Featured events

Belz Lecture 2019

On 31 Oct, our 51st Belz Lecture, *Statistics is the Crown Jewel of Data Science*, was delivered by Antony Ugoni, Director of Global Matching and Analytics at SEEK, to a large crowd of 200 people.



Antony spoke about the value that mathematics and statistics knowledge can add to data science, how important it is to really understand the problem that you're working on, and the need for passion when teaching students about statistics.

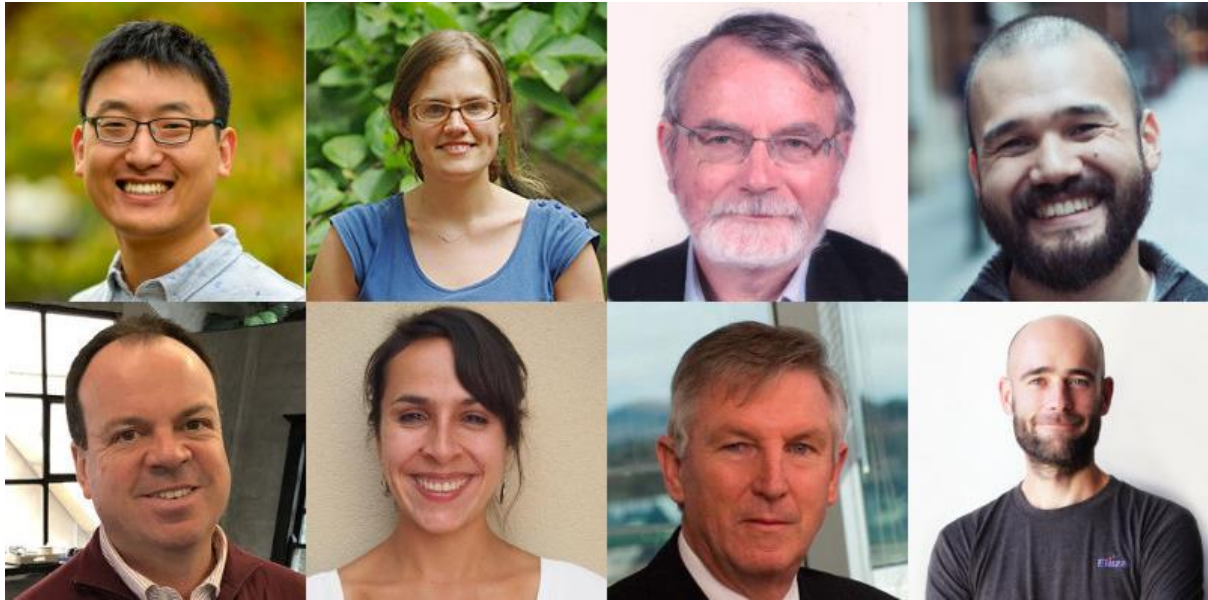
He described the five top statistics concepts applicable to his work: ANOVA, randomness, the Central Limit Theorem, the Bootstrap, and hypothesis testing. Although the Google search algorithm may suggest that 'statistics is hard', Antony's breakdown of these five concepts was very accessible and made statistics far less intimidating.

Listening to this very entertaining talk from an accomplished statistician/data scientist, there was no doubt that Antony is incredibly passionate about statistics and deserves his place among his heroes on the 'Honour Board' of Belz Lecturers.

Mentoring breakfast

On 25 Jun, our members gathered for breakfast. This was an event to connect young and old, share ideas about where statistics can take you, and also provide advice and career guidance. Breaking with tradition for our branch, attendance was members-only and the event was held in the morning. How did it go?

We invited eight statisticians / data scientists from diverse backgrounds to be our mentors for the day.



Top row: Kohleth Chia, Sandy Clarke-Errey, Harry Gielewski, Andy Kitchen
Bottom row: Stephen Leslie, Margarita Moreno-Betancur, Dennis Trewin, James Wilson

After a brief icebreaker, we formed into small groups around each mentor. The intimate and relaxed setting allowed members to get to know each other and hear about our mentors' experiences first-hand.

We had excellent feedback from those who attended. They particularly liked:

- The **diversity** of mentors' backgrounds, a good mix of academic and non-academic.
- The **morning scheduling**, which suited many members with family responsibilities, who find our evening events harder to attend.
- The **delicious food**, provided by ASRC Catering.

The discussion could have easily gone for longer, if only it weren't a workday...

We are grateful to our sponsors for the event, Eliiza and Bunnings.

Event calendar

19 March

Statistics with industry: demonstrating impact (+ AGM)

[Shirley Coleman](#)

University of Melbourne (Parkville)

Attendance: 116

30 April

Reproducibility and Open Science

[Hannah Fraser](#), [Fiona Fidler](#), [Mathew Ling](#)

University of Melbourne (Parkville)

Attendance: 40

28 May

A recipe for quantifying the impact of prevention

[Tony Blakely](#)

University of Melbourne (Parkville)

Attendance: 92

25 June

Mentoring breakfast

[See page 9 for a list of mentors](#)

Eliiza offices (Melbourne CBD)

Attendance: 36

18 July

Tutorial on sequential Monte Carlo methods in statistics

[Anthony Lee](#)

Monash University (Clayton)

Attendance: 50

14 August

Trivia night

Bobbie Peels (pub in North Melbourne)

Attendance: 16



Damjan Vukcevic and Anthony Lee

27 August

Detecting botnet activity in the IoT using machine learning

[Jill Slay](#)

La Trobe University (Bundoora)

Attendance: 32

24 September

Young Statisticians Showcase 2019

[Jiadong Mao](#), [Ravindi Nanayakkara](#), [Rushani Wijesuriya](#)

University of Melbourne (Parkville)

Attendance: 25

31 October

Statistics is the Crown Jewel of Data Science (Belz Lecture)

[Antony Ugoni](#)

University of Melbourne (Parkville)

Attendance: 200 (lecture), 30 (lecture webcast), 36 (dinner)



Audience at the Belz Lecture

18 November

Machine Learning with Python (workshops)

Patrick Robotham and colleagues from Eliiza

Eliiza offices (Melbourne CBD)

Attendance: 31

19 November

R skills workshops

Emi Tanaka, Damjan Vukcevic

University of Melbourne (Parkville)

Attendance: 20

10 December

We all count: Strengthening stats and maths through diversity

Claudia Czado, Jessica Purcell, Jessica Kasza, Anna Quagliari

University of Melbourne (Parkville)

Attendance: 30



Audience at the Belz Lecture

Financial summary

Income

Membership fees (branch component)	*\$5,334.00
Workshops (net income)	\$1,669.98
Interest on savings	\$303.05
Total	*\$7,307.03

Expenses

YSC 2019 financial support	\$1,500.00
Belz Lecture & Dinner (net loss)	\$1,592.71
Mentoring breakfast (net loss)	\$236.34
Other events	\$1,421.07
Other expenses	\$825.10
Total	\$5,575.22

Surplus *\$1,731.81

Balance sheet (at 31 Dec 2019)

Term deposit	\$16,000.00
Current account	\$6,246.59
SSA Vic funds held with the national SSA office	*\$2,456.44
Total assets	*\$24,703.03
Total liabilities	\$0
Net assets	*\$24,703.03

This financial summary is reported on an accrual basis for the year 2019

** Amended on 16 Feb 2021 to include membership income of \$1,204 for Oct-Dec 2019*

**Statistical Society of Australia
Victorian Branch Incorporated**

Consumer Affairs Victoria registration number A0058367X

This report was published on 24 Mar 2020,
and amended on 16 Feb 2021 to update the *Financial summary*

Includes written contributions from:
Ben Harrap, Rheanna Mainzer, Damjan Vukcevic

www.statsoc.org.au/victoria

