

NORTHERN TERRITORY CASE STUDY

Full name of conference:	IMSANZ & SOMANZ Combined Conference 2016
Dates:	14-17 September 2016
Host organisations:	<i>Internal Medicine Society of Australia and New Zealand & the Society of Obstetric Medicine of Australia and New Zealand</i>
Organisation type:	Professional medical societies
Number of delegates:	322
Delegate origin:	From throughout Australia, New Zealand, UK, USA, Fiji and Singapore
NT location:	Alice Springs, Central Australia
Conference venue:	<i>Alice Springs Convention Centre</i>
Professional Conference Organiser (PCO):	<i>Workz4U Conference Management</i>

Event Overview:

The *Internal Medicine Society of Australia and New Zealand* (IMSANZ) represents over 700 Consultant physicians and trainees from the field of Internal Medicine (known as General Medicine or General and Acute Care Medicine).

The *Society of Obstetric Medicine of Australia and New Zealand* (SOMANZ) is a membership organisation for those engaged in the broad field of hypertension in pregnancy or obstetric medicine. Amongst its aims is fostering collaboration with other regional and international societies interested in hypertension in pregnancy and obstetric medicine.

IMSANZ & SOMANZ combined for the very first time for their Annual Scientific Meeting held in Alice Springs in Australia's Northern Territory (NT) in September 2016. This inaugural joint meeting showcased the latest research and knowledge in both Internal Medicine and Obstetrics.

Attendees were physicians, nurses, advanced trainees, specialist obstetricians and research scientists

Optional pre-conference workshops and field trips included a presentation and tour of the iconic *Royal Flying Doctor Service* Alice Springs base and museum. A visit was also undertaken to Alice Springs dialysis specialist clinic, social enterprise and community centre known locally as *The Purple House*.

Reason for selecting Alice Springs:

The joint conference focussed on renal, rural and remote health issues, many of which were specifically relevant to the NT. It was also felt that Alice Springs would be a "bucket list" destination for many delegates, the majority of whom had never previously experienced a remote Australian location.

Whilst the IMSANZ Conference is staged annually on a rotation basis around various Australian and New Zealand locations, SOMANZ had never previously held a conference in the NT.

Over 80 speakers were featured on the joint conference programme. Key international speakers included Professor Ravi Thadhani from the *Harvard Medical School* and also Professor Liz Lightstone from the *Imperial College of London*. Northern Territory medical specialist speakers also made a major contribution to the conference programme.

The Execution:

The Conference incorporated three days of plenary presentations, breakout and poster sessions with three concurrent conference sessions held daily. An awards presentation was staged on the final day and the 2016 SOMANZ Annual General Meeting was also held during the conference.

The ‘Welcome Reception’ function was held in the *Alice Springs Convention Centre* foyer area on the first evening of the conference. The conference dinner was a casual Aussie BBQ held under the stars at renowned Alice Springs off-site venue known as *The Old Quarry*. Located at the foot of the spectacular MacDonnell Ranges and adjacent to one of the Territory’s most famous cattle stations, its rocky escarpments provided a dramatic outback setting.

Dinner entertainment included Indigenous children’s drumming group *Drum Atweme* and Indigenous artist and performer Tommy Crowe who, in addition to playing the didgeridoo, also created a “live” painting during the dinner. The artwork was subsequently auctioned off, raising A\$1300 for a donation to the Alice Springs’ ‘Purple House’ dialysis clinic. A special Indigenous ‘Welcome to Country’ presentation was also delivered at the conference opening by traditional owner Kumalie (Rosalie) Riley, an Arrernte Elder and artist.

Delegates stayed at the nearby *DoubleTree by Hilton* and also *Lasseters*, both within easy walking distance of the *Alice Springs Convention Centre*. A number of delegates also visited Uluru, in the heart of Australia, staying at *Voyages Ayers Rock Resort*.

The *NT Convention Bureau* (NTCB) prepared and presented a bid document to IMSANZ to attract this event and also hosted decision-makers from both organisations on familiarisation visits to Alice Springs. It provided ongoing assistance with local contacts and information throughout the planning process.

The Verdict:

The conference organisers spoke highly of the convention centre and Alice Springs itself.

“I believe the location in Alice Springs was a major drawcard for the conference and gave our meeting a very special setting.

Dr Shilpanjali Jesudason, MBBS, FRACP, PhD

Central and Northern Adelaide Renal and Transplantation Service, Centre of Clinical and Experimental Transplantation, Clinical Senior Lecturer, University of Adelaide

“Our event went off without a hitch - Alice Springs proved to be an excellent place to hold our meeting. Venue staff were engaging, helpful and efficient and off-site accommodation was also readily accessible. The cultural extras including the Welcome to Country and dinner in The Quarry were highlights. I would recommend Alice Springs as a conference destination and the venue without hesitation.”

Professor Don Campbell

Monash Health, Melbourne

Immediate Past President IMSANZ

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