

SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIAN SEXOLOGISTS

The Society of Australian Sexologists was previously known as the Australian Society of Sexuality Educators, Research and Therapists or ASSERT National. In order to better represent the profession ASSERT National, in 2012, made the decision to an organisational re-development, which included a name change. Below is a history of the organisation.

1970 - 1980

The Society of Australian Sexologists Ltd evolved from a group of like-minded colleagues, in the 1970s that courageously stood tall in the face of society's lack of acknowledgment of sexuality and sexual health. It is through their passion and identification of the need to bring those working in the area of sexual health together, and provide much needed community engagement, professional development and recognition of those involved with sexual health/sexology that this organisation was started.

In 1974 the University of Queensland Psychology Department organised the first National Conference on Sex Therapy. Three years later, in 1977, under the leadership of Sydney psychologist Dr Greta Goldberg, as the inaugural President, a small group of clinicians (Dr Derek Richardson, Dr Jules Black, Ms. Bettina Arndt, Dr Warwick Williams and Dr Derek Llewellyn-Jones), all who had a specific interest in sexuality commenced the organisation ASSECT (Australian Association of Sex Educators, Counsellors and Therapists). This was later changed to the acronym ASSERT (Australian Society of Sexuality Educators, Researchers and Therapists) to differentiate from our American colleagues.



**Dr Greta
Goldberg
1979**



**Dr Derek
Richardson
1981**



**Dr Warrick
Williams
1981**



**Dr Derek
Llewellyn-
Jones
1981**



**Dr Jules Black
1982
1980 - 1990**

Groups of clinicians in Victoria and Western Australia showed interest in the then NSW-based group and a National conference was held in Canberra in November 1980. Keynote speakers included Julia Heiman and Chris Tietze from the US and drew over 100 delegates. In 1981 John Money, was a keynote speaker in Sydney, where he presented his concepts of “Love Maps and Love Blots”, which attracted the attention of the Sunday papers. In 1982 Ted and Sandra Cole from the US ran a series of workshops in Sydney and were keynote speakers at the third National conference held in Melbourne. Other renowned international speakers at ASSERT conferences included Joseph LoPiccolo, Harvey Gochros, David McWhirter and Andrew Mattison.

Bettina Arndt, editor of Forum magazine was influential in changing the sexual landscape in Australia in the 1980s. Women’s magazines such as Cosmopolitan and Cleo followed suite, having sealed sections on the “G spot” and other sexual issues, which increased sexual health knowledge in Australia and no doubt their respective readerships.

In 1983, under Derek Richardson, it was decided to develop ASSERT into a national organisation and for the administration of the organisation to rotate through the States. Dr Gwen Leavesley was elected president of the new national organisation during the ASSERT conference held in Perth, Western Australia. By 1985 the national strategy was not successful, due to the professional needs of each state being different and the organisation returned to a co-operative with autonomous state bodies.

ASSERT became a member organisation of WAS (World Association for Sexual Health). Dr Jules Black from NSW was on the advisory committee of WAS from 1985 to 2001, Co-Secretary 1985-1989 and Secretary-General/Treasurer from 1989 to 1993. A bid by Drs Jules Black and Martyn Baker in Delhi in 1985 to host the WAS (World Association of Sexual Health) congress in Sydney in 1989 was unsuccessful. This was very disappointing to members of ASSERT.

In 1986, The WASS (Western Australia Sexology Society) was founded.



ASSERT National Logo



WASS Logo

1990 - 2000

In 1994, ASSERT Queensland commenced and in 1995 Victoria and South Australia were established. In 1995 Dr David Schnarch visited Australia, where he introduced the concept of 'The Sexual Crucible' through workshops around Australia under the auspices of Relationships Australia and ASSERT.

In 1998 a new wave of national co-operation arose and the National Council of ASSERT was once again established. There was a clearly formulated mission to develop a national constitution, a code of ethics, national professional standards and to establish regular national conferences.

In 1999 collaboration between Michelle Phillips of Calgary and the late Geraldine Slattery from South Australia, presented workshops in Adelaide, Brisbane and Sydney focusing on 'Affirming Women's Sexuality'. In 1999 ASSERT South Australia presented 'Sexualities: The Australian Kaleidoscope' in Adelaide.

2000 - 2010

In 2002 WASS hosted 'Essential Directions for Sexology' in Fremantle and in 2004 ASSERT NSW presented in conjunction with the School of Biomedical Sciences, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Sydney 'Sexual Diversity in the 21st Century'.



ASSERT NSW Organising Committee 2004

In 2003, at the 16th WAS Congress in Havana, Cuba, Dr Margaret Redelman and Brett McCann were successful in winning the bid to host the 18th Congress of WAS in Sydney in 2007, 'Achieving Health, Pleasure and Respect'.



Mark Ann's, Dr Margaret Redelman, Brett McCann



18th Congress of World Association for Sexology



Cirque du Soleil performance during closing ceremony

This was a very successful congress, attended by over 1200 registrants from Australia and Internationally. This congress was an enormous task and the ASSERT National organising committee consisting of Dr Margaret Redelman, who was President of the 18th WAS Congress, President ASSERT National and Vice President ASSERT NSW, Dr Chris McMahon was the Chair of the Local Scientific Committee consisting of Brett McCann, Maria Caetano and Mark Ann's.

WAS (2007)



Dr Kevin Wylie, Joanne Baker, Dr Eusebio Rubio-Aurioles President WAS, Dr Margaret Redelman, Dr Chris McMahon



Kevan Wylie, Rosemary Coates, Eusebio-Rubio-Aurioles, Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir, Margaret Redelman, Mark Ganem and Beverley Whipple



Margaret Redelman, Rosemary Coates, Sandra Lieblum, Beverly Whipple



Jules Black, Greta Goldberg, D. Narayana Reddy, Beverly Whipple and Reiko Ohkawa

For 12 years the national presidency rotated between the states:

- Mark Ann's from NSW was the inaugural president of the new National Association (1997-1998)
- Dr Diane Summers from Queensland (1998-2000)
- Gareth Merriman from Western Australia (2000-2004)
- Dr Margaret Redelman from NSW (2004-2009).

The objectives of ASSERT National moved more towards meeting the professional needs of those working in the area of sexual health/sexology by raising the profile of sexual health and providing professional development and support for its members. A unified, national accreditation criterion was developed for Sexuality Therapist, Sexuality Educator and Sexuality Researcher. There was a growing expertise in sexology/sexual health in Australia.

The first sexology program in Australia was developed by Dr Rosemary Coates and commenced at Curtin University in Western Australia in 1978. The Sydney University Diploma of Sexual Health Counselling was developed in collaboration between ASSERT NSW and the Australian College of Venerologists in the 1990s.

Despite our isolation geographically, ASSERT continued to be very active in professionally embracing and supporting sexual health issues at a national and international level. In 2008 ASSERT Qld and ASSERT ACT became incorporated and accepted onto the ASSERT National family. The bi-annual ASSERT National conference was held in Sydney and hosted by ASSERT NSW 'Sexual Health, Pleasure & Rights: The Australian Response'.

In 2009 Lynda Carlyle (ASSERT Victoria) was elected President of ASSERT National and continued in this role until October 2012. Lynda steered the growing organisation, with the support of a national committee, comprising of Diane Irvine, Dr Margaret Redelman, Francis D'Arcy-Tehan, Brett McCann, Diane Luckhurst-Smith, Jane Keany, Hilary Caldwell, Dr Gabrielle Morrissey and Jocelyn Klug.

2010 to present

ASSERT National joined the AOFS (Asia-Oceania Federation of Sexology) and became more actively involved in regional sexology development. In 2010 the conference was again held in Sydney 'Too much, too little and different: The Sexual Possibilities of the New Millennium'.

In 2012 state representatives on the National Committee, unanimously voted for ASSERT National to become a company limited by guarantee in order to be one national organisation.

We were invited to join the newly established Australasian Sexual Health Alliance (ASHA) as a founding member organisation. ASHA exists for multidisciplinary organisations working in sexual health and is facilitated by ASHM (Australasian Society for HIV Medicine). The agreement is designed to facilitate the collaboration of organisations and individuals from multiple disciplines, working together to achieve support of the sexual health workforce while relying on the infrastructure of ASHM.

ASSERT National Conference Melbourne 2012



In 2012 ASSERT National Life Member, Dr Jules Black, donated his comprehensive and rare sexology archive, collected over 40 years to Curtin University. This collection is called the 'The Jules Black Sexology Collection'.

ASSERT NSW resigned from ASSERT National in 2012. A decision by the national committee to rebrand was decided and following a national member vote, a change in organisational structure occurred. ASSERT incorporated state bodies became branches of the one national society.

ASSERT Victoria hosted the last very successful biannual ASSERT National conference in Melbourne in October 2012 'Sexuality: Beyond Difficulties, Definitions and Diversity'. Dr

Marty Klein, renowned international author, speaker, family therapist and sex therapist was the keynote speaker and delivered a series of workshops nationally.



Dr Marty Klein

A new organisation emerges

The Society of Australian Sexologists was registered with ASIC in early 2013. Lynda Carlyle and Shane O’Dea were instrumental in getting the process started.

Jocelyn Klug was elected as President of ASSERT National in 2012 and became the inaugural Chair of the Society of Australian Sexologists Ltd in 2013.

A new accreditation criteria developed under Dr Christopher Fox this was to become a benchmark for those involved in psychosexual therapy or sexuality education in Australia. The criterion is very comprehensive and incorporates features from American and European accreditation faculties.



Society of Australian Sexologists Logo

2012/13 saw the commencement of SAS branches in NSW, Tasmania and Western Australia under Dr Michael Lowey, Dr Nenad Alempijevic and Matt Tilley respectively.

National professional development workshops by Prof Barry McCarthy were run in Sydney, Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne and Brisbane in June 2013.



Professor Barry McCarthy

The Society's National Committee reflects the multidisciplinary diversity that encompasses sexology today. We are a highly professional, cohesive and dedicated group, who voluntarily give of our time for continued growth of the organisation, professional development for members, accreditation of psychosexual therapists and educators and to acknowledge to the wider community, this important aspect of sexual health and the future regulation of the profession.

The increasing involvement with the Asia Oceania Federation of Sexology (AOFS) enabled SAS the honor of hosting the 13th AOFS conference in Brisbane in October 23-25th 2014. Dr Margaret Redelman was the incoming President of the AOFS 2014-2016 and conference President, demonstrating her ongoing commitment and involvement with both national and international member organisations.

In 2015, Dr Christopher Fox was elected as National Chairperson. Chris was instrumental in the development and growth of sexology as a profession. His commitment to academia was balanced with regular promotion of the profession in media and through local and national events.

In 2017 Lisa Torney became the third National Chairperson of the Society. During her first year she focused on realigning the national face of the organisation. A key component of this was the organisation and hosting of the first annual Sexology in Practice Symposium. This symposium was a 2 day boutique professional development weekend for members and professionals with an interest in sexology.

Many thanks to Drs Margaret Redelman and Martyn Baker for the original 'History of ASSERT' that has been revised for this document and Dr Jules Black for his visual contributions. A special thank you to Jocelyn Klug for consolidating and archiving this important document in recognition of everyone who contributed to the Society of Australian Sexologists Ltd.