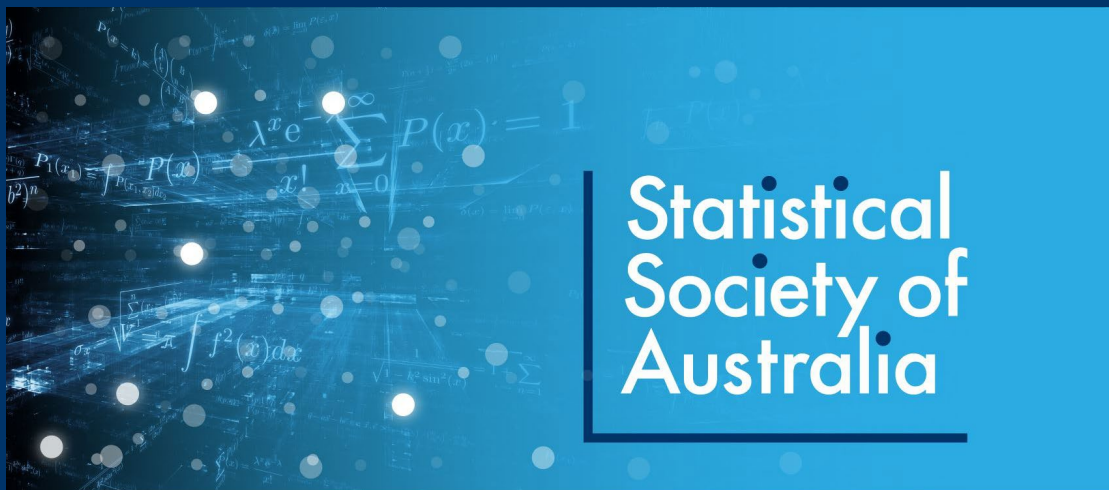


**From:** [Statistical Society of Australia](#)  
**To:** [Marie-Louise Rankin](#)  
**Subject:** Stats Matters & Events  
**Date:** Thursday, 12 January 2023 2:04:17 PM



## STATS MATTERS & EVENTS

12 January 2023

Dear Marie-Louise,

Belated Happy New Year! I hope you had a good break, coming back to work refreshed and full of energy. Or perhaps you are still on holiday?

January is always a quiet time at the SSA office. Unsurprisingly, I did not receive many newsletter contributions for this issue. In fact, I only got two, but they are excellent - a classic case of quality over quantity.

I received a travel report and Mentoring Committee report from A/Professor Karen Lamb and decided to print the entire articles in this issue, rather than only include a snippet and then make you click on a link to read the rest of the articles.

In late 2019 the SSA and CSIRO/Data 61 awarded the inaugural [Betty Allan Travel Award](#) to two recipients. Little did we know at the time that travel, something most of us had taken for granted since we were born, would become next to impossible over the coming years due to the COVID pandemic. In 2022 award recipient Karen Lamb was finally able to make it happen. You can read her report [below](#).

Karen also provided an [update on the work of the Mentoring Committee](#) in

2022. Thank you, Karen!

Marie-Louise Rankin  
SSA Executive Officer

Read newsletter in your [browser](#)

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**Would you please note that the SSA Office will be closed from Monday, 16 January until Wednesday, 18 January 2023 while the Executive Officer and the Event Coordinator are travelling for a conference site inspection.**

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**In this newsletter:**

[Karen Lamb's SSA & CSIRO/Data 61 Betty Allan Travel Report](#)

[Update from the SSA Mentoring Program Committee](#)

[Joint ASA-NCTM Position Statement on Preparing PK–12 Teachers of Statistics and Data Science](#)

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**SSA & CSIRO/Data 61 Betty Allan Travel Report**

Well, as I was soon to learn, 2020 was not a great year to receive a travel award! I had grand plans to use my SSA and CSIRO/Data 61 Betty Allan travel award in September 2020 to attend the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) conference in Bournemouth, following this with a visit to Professor Sir David Spiegelhalter at the [Winton Centre for the Public Understanding of Risk](#) in Cambridge and then onto London to meet the RSS team to discuss the [Statistical Ambassador Program](#) which trains early career statisticians in statistical communication. My vision was to bring back statistical communication knowledge from these visits to the Statistical Society of Australia. Sadly, by April 2020 it had become very clear that this plan was highly unlikely! More than two years later, I was finally able to take up my award to visit the UK in November 2022 and I certainly learned a lot.

***Winton Centre for the Public Understanding of Risk***

At the Winton Centre, I was able to learn about David's transition into work as a statistical communicator. David was already an established leader in Biostatistics internationally and a [Fellow of the Royal Society](#) (FRS) when he took up a position as Winton Professor for the Public Understanding of Risk in the Statistical Laboratory at the University of Cambridge in 2007. This was a philanthropic funded position and was initially a solo role (the Winton Centre was not established for a number of years). In this role, David set about to increase his profile doing outreach activities (e.g., science fares, news articles, talks and media appearances). It took time to build up his reputation in communication. However, he found that once he was known as someone who could communicate risk and uncertainty well, more invitations flowed his way. Some key learnings from David:

1) *Communication and media training is invaluable and essential.* David personally benefitted from a day and a half of funded training through his work which put him through his paces but helped develop his confidence.

2) *Peer support is key.* Although he often works alone when engaging with the media, David benefitted from having others around him undertaking similar roles to bounce ideas off.

3) *Beware of the draw of flashy headlines.* Statisticians are often asked to offer solutions to one-off puzzles about the probability of some rare event occurring. These could help when building your media profile but are rarely rewarding.

4) *Statistical communication is vital (but can be stressful!).* COVID-19 has helped raise the profile of the work of biostatisticians, enabling David to communicate what we actually do. Although stressful, this was highly rewarding.

### ***Royal Statistical Society Statistical Ambassador Program***

The Statistical Ambassador Program, devised by John Pullinger, was launched in 2014 in recognition of the need for confident statistical communicators and has had three cohorts to date. The RSS received funding to support the program, offering ambassadors two days of media training. Telephone mentoring from a committee of statistical/science communicators (e.g., David Spiegelhalter) was also provided. To date, 32 early-career statistical ambassadors (2014: 12, 2016: 10, 2018: 10) have been trained in the program. Ambassadors were selected through a process in which applicants outlined their statistical interests and experiences. It is anticipated that statistical ambassadors remain in this role for a prolonged period. Ambassadors have appeared in different media outlets: BBC News television and print ([National Lottery](#), [UK coronavirus figures](#), [reporting of numbers in the media](#)), ITV news ([students and COVID](#), [COVID vaccination](#)), among others. Media requests tend to be directed to the RSS Head of Media and External

Relations to identify the most appropriate ambassador to assist. Some key learnings:

1) *The program is based on training AND peer support which are essential to success.*

2) *Funding is key but difficult to obtain.* The RSS is seeking funding for more programs.

3) *It is important to recruit people willing to engage with the media in the longer term.* Not all ambassadors have remained engaged in the program. 4) *It is important to ensure support from employers.* This can be difficult outside academia.

### ***What next?***

I left the UK with a rejuvenated passion for statistical communication wondering what we can do within the SSA to support media engagement. Would a statistical ambassador program be suitable for the SSA? If so, who could we get to support the ambassadors in Australia? Encouragingly, my contacts within the RSS are keen to build greater connections with the SSA to work on communication initiatives. Personally, I would like to see more communications training and support for statisticians beyond media training. Effective communication is so critical to our work! I look forward to continuing these discussions with both the RSS and SSA in future.

In addition, I am delighted that David Spiegelhalter will be one of the keynotes for the 2023 Australian Statistical Conference in December. We will also be able to learn from his statistical communication experience through a pre-conference workshop. More details will be available soon!

A/Prof Karen Lamb

Co-Head Biostatistics Methods and Implementation Support for Clinical and Health Research Hub (MISCH)

Centre for Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Melbourne School of Population and Global Health

*Pictured (left to right): Professor Sir David Spiegelhalter and Karen Lamb, Churchill College, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, November 2022*



*Pictured: Karen Lamb enjoying the rainy Cambridge weather, Churchill College, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, November 2022*

*Pictured (left to right): Brian Tarran (Head of Data Science Platform, RSS), Mags Wiley (Head of Media and External Relations, RSS), Karen Lamb, Robert Mastrodomenico (Statistical Ambassador, RSS) London, November 2022*



## Update from the SSA Mentoring Program Committee

Following a successful program launch across the whole society in 2021, the SSA Mentoring Program committee has been busy examining feedback from the 2022 program.

2022 proved to be a big year for our committee. We aimed to recruit 20 mentor-mentee pairs but ended up with a whopping 49 mentee applications! To avoid too many mentees missing out, we managed to match **34 pairs** in the 2022 program by convincing a few more mentors to get involved. Recognising that some mentees would still miss out, we introduced a peer mentoring option for mentees who could not be paired in 2022. Mentees and mentors in the paired mentoring program also had the option to participate in peer mentoring. This resulted in **nine peer mentoring groups** of 6-8 participants; each group had an initial peer group meeting facilitated by a committee member.

Applicants for the 2022 program were mostly biostatisticians or bioinformaticians (50% mentees, 59% mentors), perhaps due to the fact the program was piloted in the Biostatistics & Bioinformatics Section in 2020 leading to greater awareness of the program among members of this section. However, we also had applicants from Bayesian Statistics, Business Analytics, Environmental Statistics, Official Statistics, Statistical Consulting and Statistical Education keen to be paired. Hopefully the 2023 program will see a few more applicants from these other sections! In addition to representation across the different sections, our committee aimed to recruit participants across the country. We had participating mentees and mentors from New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia, with mentors also located in the Australian Capital Territory, South Australia and Tasmania. Hopefully we can recruit some statisticians from the Northern Territory in future programs!

The success of the program was captured through online follow-up forms sent to the 34 participating mentors and mentees. We examined: i) **retention** in the program (i.e., completing the follow-up survey *and* reporting they had at least one meeting with their mentor/mentee), ii) **compliance** (i.e., pairs meeting at least 4 times in the 6-month program period), iii) **enjoyment** (i.e., reported enjoyment of the program), iv) **recommend** (i.e., would you recommend the program to other members?), v) **achievement** (i.e., did mentees achieve what they wanted to through the program). Although compliance was fairly low (34% of mentors and 52% of mentees who completed the follow-up survey reported meeting at least four times), all other measures of success were moderate to high. Retention ranged from 68% (mentees) to 79% (mentors) and achievement among mentees was 78%. Enjoyment was particularly high among mentees (87%), although a little lower among mentors (62%). Importantly, a high proportion of participants stated they would recommend participating in this program to others (mentees: 91%, mentors: 93%). Given

the high percentage recommending the program, the committee prepared to continue the program in 2023.

The SSA Mentoring Committee closed applications for the 2023 program in December and is currently pairing applicants. If you applied to participate this year, look out for an email in your inbox in January about the program. Remember to add [ssa.mentoring@gmail.com](mailto:ssa.mentoring@gmail.com) to your safe contacts list to make sure you don't miss out on any notifications. We look forward to another successful year of mentoring!

A/Professor Karen Lamb for the  
SSA Mentoring Committee

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## **Joint ASA-NCTM Position Statement on Preparing PK–12 Teachers of Statistics and Data Science**

A Joint Position Statement of the American Statistical Association (ASA) and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) outlines what preparation and support teachers need to successfully support students' learning of statistics and data science in the prekindergarten–grade 12 curriculum.

While this statement, published on 18 October 2022, is aimed at the US education system, it would be of interest to anyone involved in statistical education.

[Read the ASA/NCTM position here](#)

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## **Mentioned in previous newsletters**

### **ASC 2023: Call for Abstract Reviewers**

The ASC 2023 Scientific Programming Committee (SPC) is currently seeking expressions of interest from SSA members interested in undertaking the peer review of abstracts for the conference. All areas of statistical expertise are welcome. The Australian Statistical Conference, partnered with the Australian Conference on Teaching Statistics (OZCOTS), will take place in Wollongong from 10<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> December 2023.

Each reviewer will be responsible for blind reviewing up to 20 abstracts of up to

300 words aligned with their area of expertise and each abstract will have 2 reviewers. Review criteria and information on how to review the abstracts will be provided once the call for reviewers closes. **Reviewers must be available to review abstracts between April and May 2023.**

Selection of reviewers will be based on SSA membership and area of expertise, with the number of reviewers based on the number of abstract submissions. If you are able to review abstracts, please complete the [online registration form](#). Abstract reviewer registrations will close on **31<sup>st</sup> March 2023**

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**Call for nomination: Horizon Lectures, [Australian Statistical Conference](#), 10-15<sup>th</sup> December 2023 (ASC 2023)**

The Statistical Society of Australia (SSA) and ASC 2023 Scientific Programme Committee are delighted to open nominations for the inaugural Horizon Lectures, to be given at ASC2023 in Wollongong, 10<sup>th</sup>- 15<sup>th</sup> December 2023.

The Horizon Lectures aim to recognise emerging leaders in Australia's statistics community and their contributions to advancing statistical practice across academia, government, and/or industry. Lectures will be awarded to mid-career statisticians working in any discipline who have made an impact within their field(s) of expertise and have demonstrated leadership in building capacity in statistical expertise within Australia.

Up to three (3) Horizon Lectures will be awarded for presentation at ASC2023. All Lectures will be presented together as a plenary session to all conference delegates. Lectures can be on any area of statistics in line with the awardee's expertise. Each awardee will receive up to \$2,500 to cover conference and travel costs.

Nominations involve a written statement (up to 1,000 words) summarising how the nominee meets the award selection criteria. Nominees must be a member of the SSA and be employed as a statistician in Australia. Nominations must be supported by another member of the SSA.

Full details on eligibility, award selection criteria and submission are available in the nomination form, available on the [conference website](#). Nominations must be submitted by **5 pm AEST, 28<sup>th</sup> February 2023**. Late nominations will not be accepted.

Questions about the Horizon lectures can be sent to ASC 2023 Scientific Programming Committee at [asc.ozcots2023@gmail.com](mailto:asc.ozcots2023@gmail.com)

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## SSA Events

### [The Necessary SQL - An Introduction to SQL with Daniel Fryer](#)

6-February 2023, 9:00 AM (AEDT) – 7 February 2023, 5:00 PM (AEDT),  
Online via Zoom

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### Save the date: ASC and OZCOTS 2023

10-15 December 2023, University of Wollongong, NSW

[Find out more](#)

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## Other Events

### AMSI Summer School Public Lecture

Professor Chris Matthews is delivering the Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute (AMSI) Summer School Public Lecture MATHEMATICS AND CULTURE.

This is a free event that will be held virtually, or you can attend in person.

When: Wednesday 18 January

Time: 6pm AEDT (3.00-4.15pm AWST / 5.00-6.15pm AEST / 5.30-6.45pm ACDT)

Venue: Forum Theatre, Arts West Building, The University of Melbourne, Parkville Campus. Light refreshments will be served from 5pm

Online: A Zoom link for this event will be emailed to registered guests attending remotely 48 hours prior to the event.

[Click here for the registration link](#)

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Job vacancies in [SSA's Career Centre](#)

[Associate Professor/Professor in Computational Algebra](#)

New South Wales

University of Sydney

Exciting opportunity for an outstanding senior ...

[Lecturer/Senior Lecturer - Business Analytics](#)

Victoria

Monash University

Job No.:644352 Location:Caulfield campus Employment ...

[Principal Biostatistician](#)

New South Wales

Parexel Australia

Are you interested in working on mRNA vaccine ...

[Biostatistician II](#)

New South Wales

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If you have news from the Australian statistical community to share in Stats Matters and Events, please get in touch [with us](#)! We love getting feedback too.

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