



Association of Science Education Technicians NSW

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For Labbies by Labbies

asetnsw.org.au

Term 4 2025

In this issue:-

- Chairperson's Message
- Conference Photos
- Conference winners
- Margaret Croucher Award
- Margaret Croucher Award Winner
- ASET Conference Competition winners
- Spotlight on Matt Dodds
- Behind the Lab Coat
- Member's Area of Website
- Tips and Tricks
- Science Funnies
- Conference Feedback
- Our wonderful sponsors
- Merry Christmas!

Chairperson's Report Conference 2025

What an amazing experience this year's conference was – loved the energy of all of you getting out there meeting new people and learning new things! Was so great to see so many new faces and we hope you got a lot out of the 2 days of sessions and networking.

Those who made it along to Matt & Jeanettes session under the stars were treated to sights of Saturn, its rings and moons – pretty amazing considering we were in the middle of the city! Thanks so much to **Stem Reactor & Science with Matt** for sponsoring dessert and drinks and for initiating this extra super fun session.



Was great to meet **Mikala and Nicolle** our comp winners and so glad you could be there as our guests. We've welcomed many new members this year and hope to reach many more regional lab technicians, who often need support the most.



It was wonderful to honour **Margaret Crouchers** work establishing ASETNSW. She is the reason we have this amazing group today. We thank you for the countless hours and years spent setting up the systems so this volunteer group can host such large and important events for high school lab techs. Read more in Lisa's article about Margaret and our recipient of the inaugural Margaret Croucher award, **Dearne Stephens**.

We hope you enjoyed the Conference. Feedback – positive and negative – will assist us in improving again for 2026. Jo H has tinkered with the **Conference Survey** form so if the link didn't work for you the first time, please try again :)

Jo Walker (Chairperson)

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ASET-NSW Inc.

2025 The Year That Was...

A big year for ASETNSW with sold out PD days in Wollongong, Canberra and Hornsby. Our annual Conference attracted over 200 delegates. We moved to a new website, kicked off a new Members Only area and initiated the Margaret Croucher Award to recognize and celebrate other fabulous Lab Techs out there.

A massive thanks to the current volunteer team!



I feel so lucky to work with such an amazing group of people on the committee. What we manage to pull together—PD days, conferences, and so much more—is a huge undertaking with many moving parts. Lisa, Jo H, Melissa, Salena, and Jane: thank you for stepping in proactively wherever needed to keep everything running smoothly at our biggest event, and for the many hours of preparation that went into making it all happen. You guys rock! We were sorry not to have Jasmina with us this at the conference this year as she had a late injury. We missed you and your passion in the “Something New” workshop and we thank Melissa Siddons for kindly stepping in to assist Lisa Chan for a very popular session. Thank you also Jas for all the work you did in the lead-up to the event—securing new presenters and bringing your enthusiasm to the team. Looking forward to working together on more new ideas in 2026. And Loretta, thank you once again for everything you have given to ASET over the past six years. Quietly keeping the financial side running smoothly is no small task, and we appreciate the dedication you brought to this busy role.



Thank you to everyone who has offered to be part of the team. I highly recommend getting involved with the committee in the future as it is really rewarding and you can all bring new ideas and different perspectives moving forward to support our amazing community of lab techs.

Our new members area has been launched – see Jas’s page for more info. **Membership fees rise to \$50 per year from Jan 1 2026 so remember to RENEW OR JOIN by Dec 31 for our old prices.**

Our survey showed the lab tech run sessions are super popular. So much knowledge to be shared with new recruits to make their job easier. Multiple spots open for 2026 Conference, or you could even present for part of a PD day at your own school! Let us know your ideas. Share your photos with Salena (editorasetnsw@gmail.com) of Science Week fun and how your department celebrated you in Star Week.

We hope you enjoy this issue and thank Salena for pulling it all together!

Jo Walker



ASET-NSW Inc.

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Mitchell Brennan (keynote speaker)



2025 ASET-NSW Conference

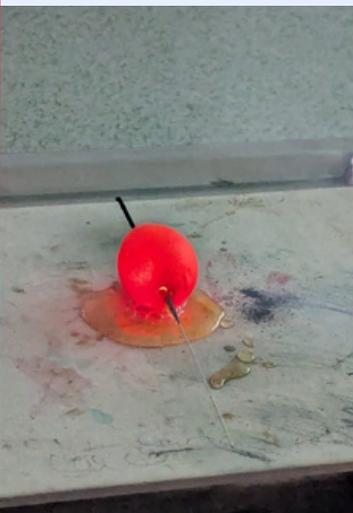




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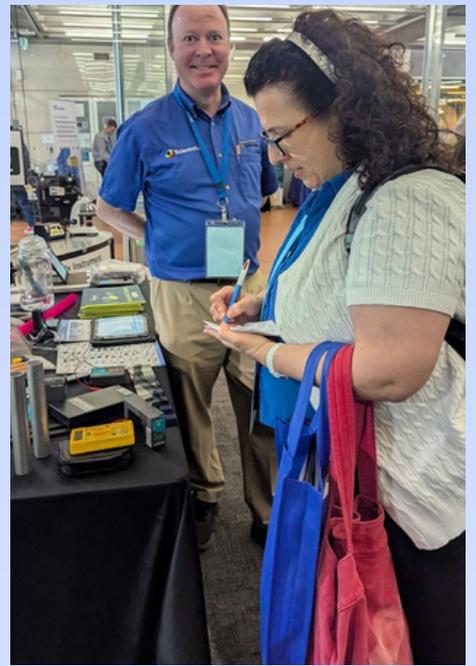


2025 ASET-NSW Conference





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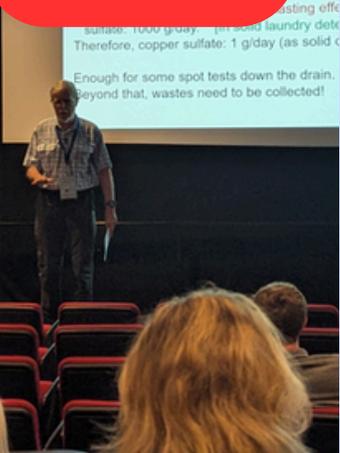


2025 ASET-NSW Conference





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2025 ASET-NSW Conference





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2025 ASET-NSW Conference

Lucky Door Prize Winners - passports



Westlab winners!



EDU Supplies winner!



Risk Assess winner!



Winc winner!



Ciderhouse winner!



Questacon winners!





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2025 ASET-NSW Conference

Lucky Door Prize Winners – passports



Fizzics Ed winner!



Science Assist winner!



Conditionaire winner!



SSAPL winner!



STEM Reactor winner!



Make It Jack winner!



Evoro winner!



Stelr winner!



Scientrific winner!





ASET-NSW Inc.

The Inaugural ASET-NSW Margaret Croucher Award

This year we introduced the annual Margaret Croucher Award in honour of the ASET-NSW Inc founder, Margaret Croucher!

Margaret is a founding member and long-time leader of ASET-NSW. She helped create a professional community that now supports lab technicians across the state. Her dedication, mentoring and generosity have uplifted countless colleagues, ensuring that science labs in schools run safely, smoothly and with professional pride.

Since beginning her career as a laboratory technician in 1988, Margaret has worked in seven schools across the State, and during this time, has always been a tireless advocate for better training, professional growth and recognition for science education technicians.

Margaret's leadership has had a profound impact on many of us. She has inspired us to continue the journey that she started for the benefit of present and future Lab Techs.

The Margaret Croucher Award is:

- to honour Margaret's significant contribution to the professional growth and development of Lab Techs ,
- to acknowledge the passion and dedication she has for her role as Lab Tech, prior to her retirement,
- to acknowledge her vision of Facilitating, Monitoring, Educating and Training High School Labbies,
- to inspire others to go beyond the comfort of their prep rooms,
- to recognise the value of high school Lab Technicians who play a pivotal role in Science education.





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The Winner of the Inaugural ASET-NSW Margaret Croucher Award is...



Dearne Stephens Lab Tech at John Edmondson High School

Dearne more than fulfilled all of our criteria for the Margaret Croucher award, plus so much more. She is a mentor to many fellow lab techs, she advocates for training and education to equip labbies with the skills and knowledge to perform their complex roles. Dearne has also developed online courses for both new and experienced lab techs, and continues to promote work, health and safety by providing information relevant to our roles. Just like Margaret Croucher, she is an inspiration for us to excel in what we do. If Margaret's means of bringing labbies together is the ASET Conference, Dearne is the bridge that links labbies around NSW through network meetings and her email list.

Dearne and Lisa Corado (Vice President)



Dearne and Margaret Croucher





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ASET-NSW 2025 Conference Competition Winners

Our regional prize winner, **Nicolle Sachs**, from Yanco Agricultural High School, had this to say about her conference experience:

"Attending the ASET conference was a fantastic experience. I definitely walked away with lots of new ideas, a few "aha!" moments, and a list of improvements I'd love to bring back to our school.

I also joined a fun, hands-on glass bending session, which was a real highlight. We picked up practical hints and tricks for bending glass safely for classroom activities, and I even made my own special stirring rod. It's not every day you get to say you've made custom lab equipment! An added extra was an optional night-time course run by Matt Dodds, where we enjoyed a relaxed talk about his passion for astrology and the upcoming solar eclipse. All of this happened with a glass of wine in hand and dessert on the table - never a bad combination! Afterwards, we headed outside to look through the telescope and were lucky enough to see the rings of Saturn. A pretty magical way to end the evening.

Another session that put a smile on my face was the guest presentation on seahorses. Between adorable photos and the fascinating stories about their habitats, it was hard not to be completely charmed.

One of the best parts of the conference was simply chatting with other lab staff from all sorts of schools. Everyone had their own stories, challenges, and clever workarounds to share. Even though we all do the same job, it was a good reminder that every school has its own personality - and its own unique set of hurdles. Hearing how others make things work was inspiring and reassuring.

A huge thank you goes to the ASET-NSW Committee for all the hard work that went into organising the conference. I also felt very lucky to be chosen as one of the competition winners. Staying right near the venue was a wonderful bonus and made the whole experience even more enjoyable."

Our metro prize winner, **Mikala Holdsworth**, from Springwood High School, had this to say about her conference experience:

*"What I have learnt at the 2025 ASET Conference:-
When the next transit of Venus is (Thanks Matt).
How to store radioactive rocks (Thanks Bridget).
The best superglue to use (thanks Bob).
Scientific uses of m&ms in the lab (thanks Jeanette).*

How to cram learning, meeting people, and having fun into 2 days. (Thanks to everyone involved - the ASET committee, sponsors, presenters, caterers, attendees).

A big thank you to the ASET committee for giving me the opportunity to attend the conference. Even though I have only been a lab assistant for 6 months, I'm definitely going to attend the conference next year."



Nicolle and Mikala



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Spotlight on Matt Dodds



In case you hadn't heard yet, our very own conference presenter, supporter, and stargazer, Matt Dodds won the prestigious 2025 Prime Minister's Prize for Excellence in Science Teaching in Secondary Schools. This particular award honours teachers who inspire students to engage in STEM. Congratulations from all of us at ASET-NSW Inc, Matt!

To read more about the award and watch a video about Matt click [here](#).

Matt presented conference workshops this year about Waves, Magnetism and Motors, Microcosm (Tardigrade hunting) and also treated us to a fantastic stargazing and info night.

We asked Matt for "Five Things we Don't Know about Mr Dodds", and this was his response:-

1. I grew up in the Blue Mountains and very much enjoyed hiking growing up and looking at the night sky through my bedroom window or on my back whilst camping.



2. I am afraid of heights but surprisingly did a cliff climb in Switzerland in 2023 whilst visiting the particle accelerator.



3. I enjoy board games such as Catan and computer games that make you think.



4. My hobby is Astrophotography and I am always planning my next adventure to capture another nebula or watch an astronomical event - check out Stargazing Adventures on Instagram to see some of my images.



5. Jen and I have two boys, Strauss (9) and Perseus (6) who are energetic, interesting little humans who love camping and kicking the footy and playing backyard cricket. I play in a mixed netball team which keeps me active and moving during term time.





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Behind the Labcoat ASET-NSW Committee Chairperson Jo Walker

For those of you wondering who that person was running around in red pants and an ASET-NSW shirt at the conference and making all the announcements in the Guthrie Theatre - here she is, our Chairperson Jo Walker.

"I was never confident enough to be a teacher, but love working with teachers and students and working out ways to help practically teach concepts to kids. My love of science was fostered by my high school teacher Ms Halloran who I tracked down recently and bought a coffee and let her know her encouragement had set me down the most fun path in life. Reach out to those teachers who made a difference for you! I have enjoyed putting on many a science show at my kid's primary schools and scout groups."



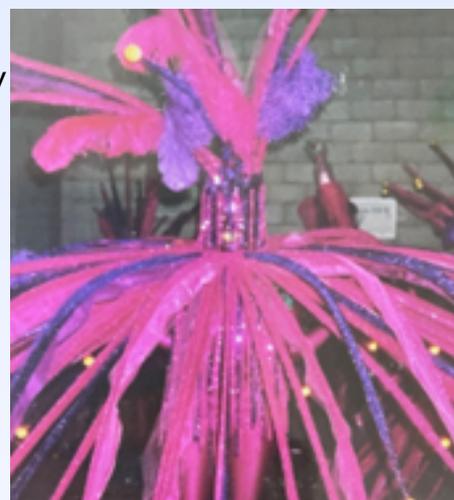
"I did a BSc and then worked as a lab tech at Syd Uni for 16 years (genetics, plant biology and later diving for marine specimens with the invertebrate zoology team). I've helped on many research projects - from checking Platypus cheek pouches, tagging Port Jackson sharks, radiotracking Broad headed snakes and planting out coral nubbins on One Tree island."

"As a mum of young kids, I heard about this fab job as a high school lab tech where you get school holidays off! I have been lucky to work with some amazing teachers at Riverview, Roseville, St Marys Cathedral college and am now at Queenwood planning snorkelling adventures at Balmoral Beach with the students."



Violet the diamond python (and Jo) at Queenwood

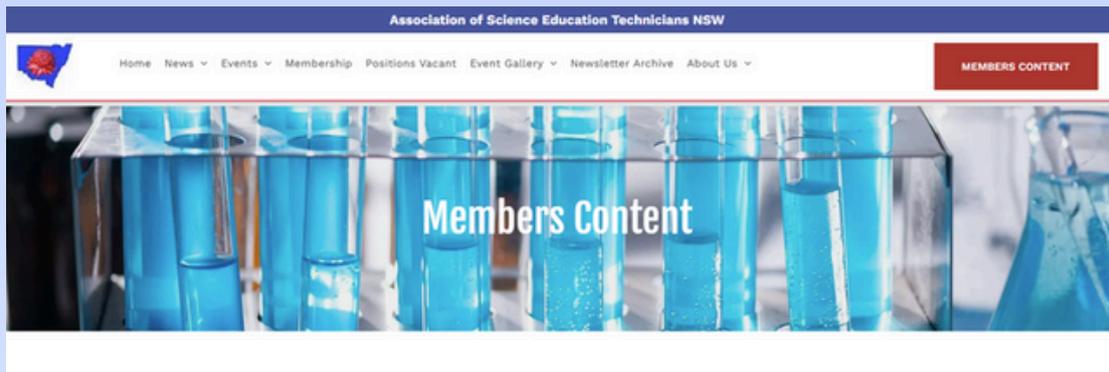
Crazy Fact: Jo was a Honey Myrtle Flower in the 2000 Sydney Olympics opening ceremony!





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New Members area on our Website



Hello ASET-NSW members,

We're delighted to announce that our brand new Members Only Resources area is officially open. Think of it as ASET's virtual prep room, except this one is always tidy, everything is labelled, and nobody "borrows" your good scissors.

This exclusive space has been created to support and celebrate the incredible work you do every day. It's designed to be practical, useful, and a little bit inspiring. A place you'll want to visit regularly as new resources are added throughout the year.

What you'll find inside:

- A growing bank of practical tools, templates, guides and links.
- Resources specifically curated for school science technicians.
- A dedicated Conference Resources section (at the moment, it's in a "zen empty state"... but it will be filled early next year. Those materials are currently available only to paying delegates of the 2025 ASET-NSW Inc Conference.)

The area is password protected and if you are a member you should have already received an email with the access details. Please don't share the access details, our PD and resources rely on continued membership support. Help us help you!

Share your brilliance and earn some credit. This hub isn't just for downloading, it's for sharing. If you have a clever idea, a resource you created, a link that saved your prep, or a template you swear by, we'd love to include it. All contributors will receive full credit for their entries. Plus, contributing is a very good way to earn a few brownie points...which may just help you shine a little brighter when nominations roll around for the Margaret Croucher Prize. (we're not saying it guarantees anything...but sharing your expertise certainly doesn't hurt!)

Thank you for being part of ASET-NSW Inc. Your enthusiasm, generosity and expertise are what make this community such a powerful support network for lab technicians across NSW and beyond.

-*Jasmina Hazrolaj* (ASET-NSW Inc. Secretary)



ASET-NSW Inc.



Tips and Tricks to Improve Your Lab Life

Did you know that if you give your magnesium ribbon a quick sand so its nice and shiny, before sending out to a prac, it will work way better?



Tradescantia Zebrina - the best plant for viewing stomata (no prep needed), just place the leaf on a slide and focus..



Brooke from Aussie Labbies says: "Not a single broken lead all year!! Embrace the 8mm glue lined shrink tube from Jaycar. You won't regret it." I am loving the custom made lead hanging system.



Science Funnies and Stuff to Make you Smile

Thanks to Leanne Drew, on Aussie Labbies (facebook), for this poem that sums up our days in the science prep room nicely:-.

*Opening the Labs, turning on the lights,
outside, the day breaks, and the pigeons take flight.*

*Checking each lab one by one, wondering if
everything on my list has been done.*

*Wipe each bench, check the floor, oh wait a
moment, I did lock that door.*

*Some dirt on the floor, so I pick up a broom
before making my way back to the staff
room.*

*Check notices, read over the day's pracs, and
once complete, set off to restock the racks.*

*Unpack the dishwasher, defrost the bull's
eyes, cut the magnesium ribbon, and
replenish the supplies.*

*The draw has broken, log a job, a parcel has
arrived, so call on GA Bob.*

*Beakers, test tubes, and cylinders at the door,
the poor dishwasher is on once more.*

*A last-minute request has come my way, as
a lovely Labby, what else can I say:*

*'Its ok, I will get that for you, let me add that
to my to do list.'*

*Did that borrowed trolley come back? I
cannot see it, pick up the phone and check
with GA Jack.*

*Matches galore on the floor, a broken box is
no good anymore.*

*Safety data sheets out of date, chemical
register still to update,*

*I am sure I just did that, oh hang on that was
last year, better get a wiggle on as Term 4 is
near.*

*Every day I learn something new, like shake
that bottle and you will get methylene blue.*

*So much to learn, no 2 days are the same. All
aboard the crazy Labby train*

*Take a breath remember to smile 😊 It's the
little things that go a mile.*





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Conference Feedback

It was an amazing event and very useful for all lab techs to attend

The seahorse hotel talk was excellent

Loved the hands on experiences and enjoyable two days of networking

I loved it all, thanks especially for Matts telescope prac

love Jeanette Tran

Thanks for a great professional development opportunity.

Highly recommended

Great conference, very well run and huge range of topics

It was an amazing event and very useful for all lab techs to attend

Great experience and good to network with other schools

The sponsors were amazing and very helpful

Was a wonderful experience meeting so many different people trying to make science better for school

A relief connecting with others in the same roles sharing the joys and frustrations of the job

Great to see new faces

For my first time it was wonderful experience



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**Merry Christmas everyone!!!
From the whole ASET-NSW Inc Committee.**



**I actually got around to making my Christmas
Chemistree this year!
-Salena**

If you have any interesting stories, jokes, photos, tips, events or other information with a science theme, that I can include in this newsletter please email me, I would love to hear your ideas. Similarly, if you have any feedback about the newsletter please let me know, it would be greatly appreciated.

Salena Bryce
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