



Australian Pain Society

2021 DISTINGUISHED MEMBER AWARD

Awarded for services to the promotion,
treatment and science of pain
management and lifelong contribution
to the Australian Pain Society.





Dr Will Howard

MBBS, FANZCA, Dip Med (Pain Med),
FFPMANZCA

Dr Will Howard is a Melburnian through and through. He was born, educated, and trained in Melbourne, before spending the majority of his career as both an anaesthetist and a pain medicine specialist there. In addition, he and his wife Sue raised their four children—Ben, Tim, Philippa, and Michael—in Melbourne. Despite being keen travellers and beach dwellers, Sue and Will continue to call Melbourne home and have welcomed two beautiful grandchildren to their family. Will exudes his Melbourne-ness in his love of coffee, chocolate-coated scotch finger biscuits, cycling, rowing, playing golf, fine wine, and an unrequited love of the St Kilda Football Club.

But to Will's career: Will graduated from Monash University and undertook his intern year at the now dismantled Prince Henry's Hospital before travelling the state and the scope of medical practice during his residency years. In mid-1982, he and Sue left for the UK where Will commenced his anaesthetic training as they moved around the South West for two years. Ben was born during this time. In mid-1984, Will returned to Victoria and commenced as an anaesthetic registrar at Western General Hospital. He spent a year there, followed by a year at the Queen Victoria Medical Centre, a year at the Austin Hospital, and then a year at the Alfred Hospital.

Fatefully, the Austin lured him back and Will returned as a Staff Anaesthetist.

Will's career as an anaesthetist was long and successful. He has had a number of papers published in anaesthetic journals and developed a special interest in thoracic anaesthesia. He established a strong link with the Australian Patient Safety Foundation and was involved with Austin Health in the Australian Incident Monitoring Study, which brought about a nationwide recognition of the importance of incident reporting as a key safety measure. He also participated in the development of an intravenous administration system containing safety features for both patient and clinician. The use of this system is now standard practice in anaesthesia.

Will started working in complex pain at the Austin Hospital not long after commencing as Staff Anaesthetist. By 2000, Will had completed the Diploma of Medicine in Pain Management at the University of Sydney and had become a Fellow of the Faculty of Pain Medicine. The Austin's Pain Service evolved over time—contracting and expanding, separating into acute and chronic services, and re-joining to become a single service—often repeating the same manoeuvres as politics and personnel came and went. Will was appointed Director of the Chronic Pain Service from 2005 and this role evolved to Director of Pain Services in 2012. Under Will's leadership, the Austin Pain Service was accepted as a training facility for the Faculty of Pain Medicine. Many further expansions of the team occurred under Will's leadership.

Throughout Will's years in the Austin Pain service, he was a strong advocate for excellent pain care for all who attended the service. He championed true interdisciplinary care, as well as excellence in pain medicine interventions. He was a mentor for many clinicians, a teacher for many trainees and allied health students, and a supportive, kind, and loyal manager for his staff.

Will joined the Australian Pain Society (APS) in 1993 and volunteered to be Newsletter Editor in 2006, contributing as an Office Bearer to board meetings. Alongside Tracy Hallen, Will made several changes over the course of a decade to ensure the success of the newsletter. These changes including overseeing its adaptation to an e-publication in late 2006, which resulted in considerable savings in production and helped to enhance reader engagement and access. He also championed the change in frequency from quarterly to ten editions per year, allowing members to, in Will's words: "move from gorging to grazing". Will was also a huge proponent of the APS member "Recent Publications" section of the newsletters, believing in the importance of promoting visible scientific contributions amongst our members. In 2013, Stephanie Davies joined Will as Co-editor, and was "*struck by his ability to provide a bird's eye view of broad concepts, and equally detect and amend small details that would escape most.*" The newsletter remains an important and valued source of information and engagement, and Will's tenure helped to cement its use and relevance to the APS membership.

In 2012, Will oversaw a team of committed health professionals in revising a publication for Reader's Digest focusing on consumers managing pain. This work resulted in nearly \$20,000 worth of donations made to the APS.

Will joined the APS Board as Secretary in 2015, and was a lead author of numerous submissions to government and key stakeholders, across a range of areas including chronic disease prevention and the review of the Medicare

Benefits Scheme. He also headed up the media committee, and along with other key board members, developed a strategy to ensure optimised promotion of APS ASMs and the activities of APS members. Will strongly supported the formation of the Basic Pain Research Special Interest Group (BPR SIG, established in 2017) and championed Board representation for each SIG, remaining the APS Board representative to the BPR SIG until 2021.

Following Will's retirement from the Austin in 2019, he expanded his role as a member of the WorkSafe Victoria Clinical Panel. In this role, Will has assisted in developing and implementing a multidisciplinary and independent medical examination program where injured workers requiring spinal fusion surgery are seen by both a pain medicine specialist and a spinal surgeon at the same time. This allows for a true biopsychosocial assessment to occur, utilising the expertise and experience of both specialists. This has allowed for injured workers and their treaters to receive comprehensive reports not only determining the appropriateness of surgery, but also discussing alternative interventions to often highly invasive surgery. The other roles that Will has undertaken on the Clinical Panel have resulted in his expertise reaching many individual injured workers and their clinicians as well as impacting on policies that will assist in humanising the workers' compensation system.

Will also joined the Board of PainAustralia in mid-2019 for a one-year term, further strengthening the ties between the APS and PainAustralia organisations and supporting their shared missions to promote better access to pain management for all Australians.

He stepped down from the APS Board and associated roles at the 2021 AGM. His deft ability to strategise and his trademark energy have been sorely missed.

Will's retirement from most of his roles has allowed him time to pursue his many interests and to focus his keen eye with great vigour on the environmental causes that he is passionate about.