



AAG News

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Report from the Australian (née Victorian) Algebra Group

A brief history of the Australian Algebra Group

A history of the Australian Algebra Group is necessarily brief. It came into existence in December 2016 when the Council of the AustMS agreed that the Victorian Algebra Group could change its name to the Australian Algebra Group (AAG). The main task of the AAG will be to organise the annual Australian Algebra Conference, which will replace the annual Victorian Algebra Conference. The name changes reflect the fact that the annual conference has established itself at the national level. The group is funded according to the Society's funding rules for special interest groups, where financial support is via membership and a subvention based on the number of AAG members. AustMS members may elect to join the AAG when they renew their AustMS membership.

The first Australian Algebra Conference will be held at the end of 2017 — the venue and precise dates will be announced on the AAG website: <http://austalg.ltumathstats.com>.

A brief history of the Victorian Algebra Group

The first *Algebra Conference of Victoria* was held in 1983 at The University of Melbourne. It has been run every year since with broad participation from across Australia—typically 25% of participants have been from interstate or overseas.

The conference grew out of a two-day workshop on universal algebra and lattice theory held at La Trobe University in 1982. The success of the workshop led Gordon Preston to suggest that we should do something similar every year, and so the series of annual conferences began. Initially, the venue for the conference rotated through La Trobe, Melbourne and Monash universities, with the host university absorbing costs.

In 1987, RMIT joined the mix and hosted the 1988 conference. At Gordon Preston's suggestion, Kathy Horadam made a submission to the AustMS for formal status as a Special Interest Group. This was approved and in May 1988 the *Victorian Algebra Group* (VAG) came into existence—the first Special Interest Group of the AustMS. The principal activity of the VAG was to run the annual algebra conference, whose name morphed in 1992 into the *Victorian Algebra Conference* (VAC).

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The VAC has a proud tradition of encouraging student talks. Many Australian graduate and honours students in algebra gave their first conference talk at the VAC. Typically between 25% and 40% of participants have been students and 30% of the talks have been given by students.

In 2006, the VAG created a prize for the best student talk at the VAC. To acknowledge his important role in the formation of the group and the annual conference, the prize was named the *Gordon Preston Prize*. So far the prize winners have come from the University of Melbourne (5), the University of Sydney (3), La Trobe University (2) and Monash University (2).

Go to <http://austalg.ltumathstats.com> for more information about the group, the conference and the prize.

Report on the 34th Victorian Algebra Conference

The 34th Victorian Algebra Conference was held at the City Campus of La Trobe University on 22–23 November, 2016. It was organised by Marcel Jackson and Brian Davey and was supported financially by the AustMS, via the VAG, and by La Trobe University's *Discipline Research Program in Mathematical and Computing Sciences*.

There were 35 participants: 25 from Victoria, 5 from New South Wales and 3 from Tasmania. Of the 17 talks, five were given by students. The two plenary talks were given by Murray Elder and Kathy Horadam.

The winner of the Gordon Preston Prize for the best student talk was Jon Xu (University of Melbourne) for his talk 'The thickness of Schubert cells'. Jon also received the prize in 2012.

This 34th iteration of the VAC was of special significance, as it was the final conference to be held under the title 'Victorian Algebra Conference'.

After having served as chair for 13 years, this is my final VAG report. Lawrence Reeves of the University of Melbourne has been elected as the first chair of the Australian Algebra Group.



Brian Davey is an emeritus professor at La Trobe University. His research specialty is universal algebra with an emphasis on the theory of natural dualities and applications of Priestley duality to algebras arising in algebraic logic. His text *Introduction to Lattices and Order*, co-authored with Hilary Priestley, has sold over 10,000 copies and has over 5300 Google-Scholar citations. He is Co-editor in Chief of *Algebra Universalis*, an Associate Editor of the *Bulletin of the AustMS*, and was an Associate Editor of the *Journal of the AustMS* from 1994 to 2004. He was an AustMS Council member from 2004 to 2006. He was chair of the Victorian Algebra Group from 2004 to 2016. Brian is a coffee enthusiast and in his spare time he plays the ukulele.