FSRACA National Conference 2026 – Scholarship Report
30 September – 2 October 2026, Gold Coast

Dear Rosalie and the SRACA WA Committee,

Firstly, I would like to sincerely thank SRACA WA for awarding me the $2,000 scholarship to attend the 2026 FSRACA National Conference on the Gold Coast. Without this financial assistance, I would not have been able to attend, and I am incredibly grateful to have been given this opportunity.

One of the greatest things I took away from the conference was the sense that we are all part of a much bigger team within the sterilising and medical device reprocessing industry. Although we may work in different hospitals, departments and states, we share many of the same experiences and challenges. Being able to connect with others, share knowledge and discuss how we approach problems reminded me how valuable our professional community is and how much we can learn from and support one another.

Two keynote speakers in particular had a significant impact on me. The first was Brooke Hanson OLY OAM and her presentation, When Silver is Gold. Brooke's message about resilience and leadership really resonated with me. I took away that we will not always win, but we can always pick ourselves back up; that pressure can be a privilege; and that we need to show up fully and lead ourselves first.

One question Brooke asked has particularly stayed with me: “Do people get my calm or my chaos?” In an environment where we regularly work under pressure, this challenged me to think about what I bring to my team as a leader. I want to show up fully, lead by example and, particularly when things are difficult, give the people around me my calm rather than my chaos.

I have since contacted Brooke to request a copy of her slides because I would like to take some of her messages back to my team at King Edward and share them with our technicians and nursing staff. I believe there is real value in applying these ideas to the way we work together and manage pressure.

Julie Cross's presentation on the power of positive energy was another highlight for me. Julie spoke about what she describes as a “personal energy crisis” and the importance of keeping our heads up, connecting with the people around us and being conscious of the energy we bring into our workplaces and our lives.

Her message that what flows from us flows back to us particularly resonated with me. If we want respect, we need to give respect. The way we think, speak and feel about ourselves also matters. We need to be our own cheerleaders and continue to “muscle up” mentally.

This feels especially relevant to our profession. We work with constant pressure and change, alongside the responsibility of knowing that the work we do directly contributes to patient safety. Julie's presentation reminded me that resilience does not mean avoiding difficult days. Life and work will have highs and lows, and resilience is something that becomes stronger through experiencing and working through them.

I also loved the simple mindset shift from “Poor us, we have so much work to do” to “Lucky us, we have lots of work to do.” It doesn't make the workload disappear, but it changes the energy we bring to it. Julie reminded us to keep our humour, find the joy where we can and not allow pressure, monotony or fear to take all of our energy.

In my own role, I find it relatively easy to teach people what to do and how to do it. The greater challenge is inspiring and empowering people to manage pressure, change and difficult situations with confidence and resilience. Brooke and Julie's presentations gave me a real mindset reset and renewed my enthusiasm to return to my team, show up for them in the best way I can and lead by example.

The conference also provided an invaluable opportunity to consider the future of our profession. One of my key professional takeaways came from Mr Bob Hunt and his presentation, From Capacity to Complexity: Why the Next Decade of Surgical Performance Will Be Won or Lost in Reprocessing. His message that the challenge facing surgical instrument reprocessing in the future will be a complexity problem, rather than simply a volume problem, particularly stayed with me.

As surgical procedures, instrumentation and technology continue to evolve, our challenge will not simply be managing more work, but managing increasingly complex work safely and effectively. This reinforced for me the importance of continuing to develop the knowledge, skills and capability of our reprocessing teams so that we are prepared for what is coming.

At the same time, the conference reinforced the importance of remaining grounded in standards such as AS 5369 as we navigate an ever-changing area of healthcare. Innovation and increasing complexity need to be supported by strong standards, knowledgeable staff and a continued focus on patient safety.

Finally, I was genuinely humbled by the kindness shown to me by the SRACA WA Committee. From taking me out for a lovely dinner to simply taking the time to talk with me, ask what I thought of the conference and make me feel included, I felt incredibly supported. I came away having formed new professional relationships with people from across WA and Australia and with a much stronger sense of belonging to our wider professional community.

I returned from the Gold Coast with new knowledge and connections, but perhaps most importantly, with renewed energy and enthusiasm for my role and for the people I work with. The conference reminded me that while our industry will continue to change and become increasingly complex, we have an enormous resource in each other. By sharing our knowledge, supporting one another and continuing to learn, we are better equipped to meet those challenges while keeping patient safety at the centre of everything we do.

Thank you again to Rosalie and the SRACA WA Committee for making this experience possible. I am extremely grateful for the opportunity, and I hope to pass the benefit of the scholarship on by sharing what I have learned with my team and continuing to support and empower those around me.

Kind regards,
Kate Seed