

# March 2020 Monthly Meeting

The Monthly Meeting will be held Wednesday March 4 at 7pm.

## Guest Speakers: Dr Ken Harvey and Mal Vickers

### Topic: Data Scraping and Snake Oil

Why do we receive so much junk advertising from pharmacies for what appear to be shonky medicines? Ear candles, turmeric, krill oil, green eat extract, dodgy weight loss pills, does any of this work? Do we need it? Professor Ken Harvey (Public Health) and his student Mal Vickers recently embarked on a research project to characterise the Australian therapeutic goods marketplace, where only certain goods may be advertised, typically complementary medicines and certain devices. Through website scraping techniques, they extracted the data relating to 2000 regulator determinations, these are the outcomes of complaints about the advertising of therapeutic goods. The findings are an eye-opening window into a world of self-regulation, ineffective products, breaches of the law, exaggerated claims and misleading advertising.

**Dr. Harvey** was awarded the Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science (ANZAAS) Medal for, “the teaching of science throughout Australia and New Zealand and contributions to science which lie beyond normal professional activities” (2016). In 2017 he was made a Member (AM) in the General Division of the Order of Australia, “for significant service to community health and the pharmaceutical industry through roles in developing guidelines for the ethical use of antibiotics”. Dr Harvey is currently President of Friends of Science in Medicine and an Associate Professor in the School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, Monash University.

**Mal Vickers** is mature age postgraduate student studying Master of Public Health at Monash University. Mal was previously (prior to 2018) an electronics engineer working in medical technology and research laboratory equipment. He has worked in both industry and for universities. Mal has had a long association with the Australian Skeptics. He is also the complaints officer of the Friends of Science in Medicine.

## In-house Speaker: Jim Duff

Our member speaker is Jim Duff, who will be reminiscing on his career in computing.

### Meeting Agenda

7.00pm sharp: Meeting opens. MC is Peter Bacon

Guest speaker: Dr Ken Harvey and Mal Vickers

President's Report: David Stonier-Gibson

Social break

Q and A with George Skarbek

In-house speaker: Jim Duff

What's New? with George Skarbek

9.30pm: Close

**Please remember your membership card or a photo of your QR code on your phone**

**The meeting is streamed live online at <https://tv.melbpc.org.au>**

**Don't forget, directly after the meeting WAFFLE SIG at Fong's Chinese restaurant in Bentleigh. This is a totally social gathering where you can enjoy a snack, a full meal or just a cup of coffee. Sketch maps at the meeting or use [Google Maps](#)**

