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Pathologists raise profile using criminal underbelly

Melbourne's Old Watchhouse is the kind of place that people used to avoid but that wasn't the case recently when there was standing room only for a public forum on Pathology and Melbourne's Underbelly.

The forum, which attracted over 100 guests ranging from senior high school students, university undergraduates and members of the public, explored the link between pathology and crime investigation.

The brainchild of the Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia (RCPA), Pathology and Melbourne's Underbelly was a curtain raiser to the College's annual Pathology Update conference.

President of the [RCPA](#), Associate Professor Paul McKenzie, said the College wants to make people more aware of the vital place of pathology in medicine.

"We knew we had to do that in a way that not only informed people but entertained them as well. The venue choice was also pivotal to the success of the forum.

"Melbourne was the location of this year's Pathology Update conference, so we drew on the concept of the city's criminal underbelly which has received so much public attention in recent years.

"The Old Melbourne Watchhouse was the perfect place to tell people about the importance of pathology in crime investigations," said Professor McKenzie. Hosted by actor Genevieve Picot, the four person panel was a who's who of Victorian law, pathology and crime writing. Forensic Pathologist Dr David Ranson, former Victorian homicide detective turned crime writer Charlie Bezzina, teacher and crime writer Vikki Petraitis and barrister and crown prosecutor Ray Gibson shared insights on the link between pathology, the law and crime writing.

"For an hour the audience was clearly spellbound by the stories they heard," said Professor McKenzie.

Following the public forum, guests were taken into the Watchhouse cells where they were able to speak one-on-one with 12 different pathologists about crimes committed in Australia and around the world. Topics included the Tennessee Body Farm and the case of Tina Watson, the US woman who died while on her honeymoon, scuba diving on the Great Barrier Reef. Her husband Gabe was convicted of her manslaughter.

Professor McKenzie said the outstanding response to Pathology and Melbourne's Underbelly is a sign that the RCPA is creating important links between pathologists and the community.

A video of the event was made and can be viewed at <http://www.rcpa.edu.au/Publications/EducationalVideo/General.htm>

ENDS:

Caption: Forum panel (front to back): Vikki Petraitis, Genevieve Picot, Dr David Ranson, Charlie Bezzina and Ray Gibson.

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