



Associate Professor Denice Higgins
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Current Role:

Director and Senior Specialist Forensic Odontologist

Brief Work History

I am currently the Director of the Forensic Odontology Unit in Adelaide, South Australia (SA). In this role I administer the Unit and supervise the staff. As a registered specialist I provide forensic odontology services to Australian Government and Policing Agencies and have testified in Australian Court of Law. I have provided odontology identification services for the South Australian Coroner for over eighteen years.

I am a scientific researcher and Associate Professor at the University of Adelaide in South Australia. In this role I coordinate and teach a Graduate Diploma course in Forensic Odontology and supervise post graduate research students. My research interests are in forensic human identification. I received my doctorate in forensic biology increasing the scientific knowledge with regards to DNA identification from degraded human teeth. As an educator and researcher, I have published multiple chapters in textbooks and numerous scientific papers in peer-reviewed journals.

I joined the Royal Australian AirForce Reserve in May 2020 as a specialist dental officer and began working with Unrecovered War Casualties Army (UWC – A) and Historic Unrecovered War Casualties – Airforce (HUWC – A) in 2021 to help in the effort to repatriate Australian Soldiers from past conflicts.

I chair the forensic odontology Technical Advisory Group within the Medical Sciences Scientific Advisory Group for the Australian National Institute of Forensic Sciences (NIFS) and am the immediate past president of both the Australian Society of Forensic Odontology (AuSFO) and the South Australian branch of the Australian and New Zealand Forensic Science Society (ANZFSS).

DVI Experience

I played an active role in the DVI process following the Victorian bushfires and the crash of MH17 for which I was awarded a Humanitarian Overseas Service Medal and an AFP Operations Medal.

In 2022 I was awarded a group commendation for my involvement in the DNA identification of the HMAS Sydney unknown sailor by the chief of the Royal Australian Navy.

I am the forensic odontology DVI coordinator for South Australia and sit on the SA DVI Committee.