The ANZBMS International Travel Award enabled my attendance at the IBMS Herbert Fleisch Workshop in Bruges earlier this year, and afforded me the opportunity to present and discuss my work with some of the key figures in the field of osteocyte biology and skeletal genetics.

One of my aims before the meeting was to refine our recent work exploring the osteocyte transcriptome with the feedback of senior scientists and my peers prior to its publication. I feel this meeting was a particularly good forum for this interaction as many of the attending early stage researchers were given the opportunity to present both a talk and poster. Through the talks I was able to identify a number of projects with particular relevance to our work and follow those up in the subsequent poster sessions, providing new angles for interrogating our data and forging professional contacts amongst the international bone research community. Personally, I found the opportunity to present my work in both forms ensured the dialogue at my poster was spent not introducing my work, but rather discussing the findings and potential future lines of investigation. These interactions have stoked ideas for analysis of our data, specifically approaches in which it could be applied as a meaningful lens to view human diseases with skeletal involvement. I believe achieving this aim at the Herbert Fleisch Workshop has provided insight into what are the key messages and points of discovery in our data, which has been invaluable as we consolidate our findings for publication.

My second aim of the meeting was to discuss strategies to interrogate and validate our data, drawing on the experienced insight of the faculty of invited speakers. Prior to the meeting I had hoped to gain the insights of Professor Lynda Bonewald, particularly identified for her experience using mice models to characterise genes important to osteocyte biology. I was lucky enough to talk extensively with her about our findings and some of her work at my poster immediately following my talk. This insight was particularly pertinent regarding her work characterising the role of genes such as *Mepe*, as we face a similar challenge ascribing function to the newly identified genes in our transcriptomic data. Further to this aim, I also had the good fortune of discussing my work with the other key note speakers at the conference. These conversations provided insight into how we might use other molecular biological and immunohistochemical approaches to validate the findings we have observed *in silico*, and how we might access human bone samples to recapitulate our mouse based insights. This potential collaboration, enabled through the Herbert Fleisch meeting, could be very important to validate our work and to use our murine discoveries to gain insights into human biology.

The intimate nature and rich discussion facilitated by the Herbert Fleisch Workshop made an extremely productive setting to cultivate ideas and network with the international bone research community. By enabling my attendance at the meeting, the ANZBMS travel award has helped me refine my work as we prepare for publication, allowed me experience in presenting my work in a number of formats and cultivate a professional network amongst the bone research community at a critical formative stage of scientific career.