

Notice of the 2023 Annual General Meeting

The 51st Annual General Meeting of the Australian Society for Microbiology was held on Thursday 14th September 1pm AEST, via Zoom,

Minutes

1. Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country

2. Apologies

John Finlay-Jones, John Merlino, Melissa Brown, Ulrike Kappler, Harsha Sheorey, Tereena Lucas, Priscilla Johannesen, Peter Revill, Carola Venturini

3. Minutes of the 2022 AGM & EGM

- i. Motion: "That the Minutes of the 2022 Annual General Meeting (Agenda Item 3) be accepted."

Accepted as true and correct

Proposed by Anthony Baker and seconded by Kate Seib

- ii. Motion: "That the Minutes of the 2022 Extraordinary General Meeting (Agenda Item 3) be accepted."

Accepted as true and correct

Proposed by Julian Rood and seconded by Anthony Baker

Note there were two proxy votes received (Mark Willcox and Brendan Crabb) – both voted for accepting motion i and ii.

4. Business Arising from the Minutes

Nothing brought forward

5. Presentation of the Annual Report and Branch Reports by the President - Prepared and presented by Mark Schembri

a. Annual meeting

The meeting in Perth was a huge success. We had with 439 in-person attendees, 28 virtual registrations, 9 Trade booths, 258 submitted abstracts, >150 talks and 106 poster presentations. National support for Perth meeting. We provided 50 x \$200 discount registrations for the conference to students and ECRs with up to 5 years equivalent experience post their highest qualification. We also encouraged all state branches to offer an extra travel support award, which we matched. We thank the state branches for supporting this initiative.

We had a few firsts:

Inaugural ASM Industry Engagement award (Andrea McWhorter)

Inaugural Early Career Microbiology Educator Award, won by Charmaine Lloyd

Clinicon - For the first time, we ran our CliniCon meeting in parallel with the national conference, and this provided new interaction opportunities for our members as well as our Trade exhibitors.

Great involvement. I think we had 80 poster judges!

Thank you to the Perth Local Organising and Scientific Program Committees, chaired by Charlene Kahler and Josh Ramsay, respectively. Thanks also to Kate Seib and Hayley Newton from the Executive Committee.

b. Moving the AGM to post conference and online

There is general consensus that this works and we will continue to keep this format.

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c. Update on Honours student initiative – free membership

14 in 2023 so far with more in the pipeline; please push this.

d. Equity and Diversity committee.

Has been initiated.

We have identified a National Chair – Dr Yogitha Srikhanta, a postdoctoral researcher from the Department of Microbiology at Monash University.

Congratulations Yogi.

Yogi has established a committee. You will hear more about this committee moving forward. Introduction of the committee to members in the ASM newsletter and MA.

e. State Branches

I would like to thank all state branches for their hard work over the last year, and for engaging strongly with new activities, such as providing summer scholarships, and funds for people to travel to our meeting and adjunct meetings like AusMe. It is wonderful to see how well state and national are working together and we hope to keep this dynamic strong. Meeting 2x per year with state/national now.

f. SIGs

Reaching out to build engagement and support for SIGs. 3-4 meetings per year.

Thank you for your activities.

We can provide support for your meetings – just ask.

New SIG – Gut Microbes

g. Parliamentary Friends of Microbiology

Peter Traynor instrumental in helping to establish a Parliamentary Friends of Microbiology group, and for bringing the society and our annual meeting to the attention of MPs.

Myself, Dena Lyras, Peter Traynor and Julian Cox were in Canberra in June to kick off this event.

We met with a number of Federal Parliamentary Members and Senators (and their staff and advisors), with a goal to increase the visibility of microbiology in Australia and present the ASM as an unbiased expert group able to give advice on all things microbiology.

We are now in the process of following up on the connections we made during this event, and I hope we can build these networks to create new opportunities for all of our members.

I'd like to thank Peter Traynor for his efforts and hope we can use this relationship to build our profile with government.

h. ASM Hour

Continues to deliver a great forum for talks. Thanks to Kate Seib, Hayley Newton and out theme leaders.

i. Strategic Plan Update

We committed to running a review of ASM and developing a strategic plan to reflect our new ideas for ASM in the future. This has gone slower than I expected, and we are now at a junction where we have set up a plan and have already enacted most of our ideas. The executive committee will review this in the coming weeks to decide where we go from here.

j. 2024 National meeting

Will be in Brisbane. Chair of LOC Ulrike Kappler. Planning is well advanced.

OVERALL

ASM is in good shape.

We continue to increase our MASMs and FASMs, thank you to the NEQB and to Julian for chairing that committee, and to state branches for encouraging people to apply.

Our adjunct meetings are growing and very successful - BacPath, Ausme, Clinicon, Educon, Tri-State, MicroSeq

We have a growing presence on social media, and our younger members are increasingly involved in these efforts.

We also have a very committed, cohesive and effective executive and council. A lot of work goes on behind the scenes to make sure all things run well and we are trying hard to deliver benefits to all members.

The quality and impact of Microbiology Australia is also growing.

Thank you to all for being here and supporting the society.

I really want to thank the executive committee, council and state branches, communication ambassadors, and SIG chairs, who all work very hard and spend a lot of hours to build the society to what it is, and for their collegiality.

This is a wonderful group who are working hard to maintain and extend the ASM, all for the good of the discipline and the members.

6. Report from the Vice-President, Scientific Affairs for the National Scientific Advisory Committee – Prepared and presented by Kate Seib

It has been a wonderful year with many ASM-led and ASM-supported scientific activities. I would like to thank everyone who has been involved in the organisation of these events, as well as the speakers and attendees. Your time and effort are greatly appreciated and helps make ASM such a great society.

Key activities and highlights since the 2022 AGM include:

- *BacPath - Brisbane, 27-30 Sept 2022*
Organising committee - Mark Walker (Co-Convenor), Ulrike Kappler (Co-Convenor), Olivia Jessop, Timothy Wells, Evgeny Semchenko, Matthew Sullivan, Freda Jen, Makrina Totsika, Christopher Day, John Attack.
- *AusME - Melbourne, 7-9 Nov 2022*
Organising committee - Chris Greening, Kate Howell, Ashley Dungan, Zahra Islam, Steve Petrovski, Christina Birnbaum, Vanessa Marcelino.
- *ASM 2023 WA (Perth; 3-6 July 2023) - The conference at the Perth Convention centre was a great success with 439 face-to-face and 28 virtual registrants.*
Organising committee - Charlene Kahler (Chair), Mitali Sarkar Tyson (Vice Chair), Josh Ramsay (Scientific Program Committee (SPC) Chair), Deidre Gleeson (SPC Vice-Chair), Timothy Barnett, Geoff Coombs, Nicole Bzdyl, Deirdre Gleeson.
- *CliniCon - (Perth; 4-5 July 2022) The second CliniCon meeting was held concurrently with ASM which worked very well and will follow a similar format in 2024.*
Organising Committee - Belinda McEwan, Mikayla Kingston, Allison Imrie.
- *EduCon (Sydney; 6-7 July 2023)*
Organising Committee - Thiru Vanniasinkam, Megan Lloyd, Charmaine Lloyd.
- *MicroSeq2023 (Virtual; 6-7 September 2023)*
Organising Committee - Alistair Legione, Rebecca Roach, Cameron Reid, Michelle Wille, Angelique Ray, John Webster, Rhys Parry.
- *ASM Tris-State Scientific Meeting (Darwin 8-10 September 2023)*
Organising Committee - Janessa Pickering, Janessa Pickering, Justin Morgan (co-

chair)

Ritika Kar-Bahal, Megan Lloyd, Ella Dickie

- ASM Hour - the monthly online ASM Hour symposia have continued to be well attended with up to ~120 people joining us each month. We no longer require registration and there is a Zoom link to join the seminar on the ASM website. The November ASM Hour will focus on Microbial Ecology and Environmental Microbiology, and our December ASM Hour will focus on One Health organised by the Vet Micro SIG. I remind everyone that all SIGs are welcome to organise/host an ASM Hour next year.
Organisers – Aimee Tan, Kate Seib, Hayley Newton, NSAC Theme Leaders (see names below).

Upcoming Events

- ASM 2024 - Brisbane, 1 - 4 July 2024, as well as EduCon and CliniCon.
- AUSME 2024 – details coming soon.
- BacPath 2024 – details coming soon.

NSAC updates

A big thank you to all our Theme leaders and their contributions to NSAC.

- Clinical Microbiology - Roy Robins-Browne, Gary Lum
- Microbial Ecology and Environmental Microbiology - Linda Blackall, Chris Greening, Kate Howell
- Molecular Microbiology - Melissa Brown, Jai Tree
- Public Health Microbiology - Lea-Ann Kirkham, Robyn Marsh
- Virology - Peter Reville, Adam Taylor
- ASM Ambassador, Scientific Affairs - Aimee Tan, Ulrike Kappler
- EMCR Representative - Evgeny Semchenko

This will be my last AGM as VP Scientific Affairs, and I would like to thank everyone for their support over the last few years. I am thrilled to hand this role over to Hayley Newton who undoubtedly will do a fantastic job.

7. Report from the Vice-President, Communications Prepared and presented by Rebecca LeBard

Social Media Followers at a Glance:

Facebook: 3015 up 115

Twitter: 4852 up 281

LinkedIn: 1524 up 401

Instagram: 303 up 85

Role of the Communications Ambassador

The ambassador community works to connect ASM members, to promote activities of the ASM to members and to create public awareness of microbiology.

This is facilitated by the following activities:

- Sharing information on ASM and microbiology on your personal and the ASM Twitter accounts;
- Following, sharing posts, making contributions and creating content for our social media accounts and the ASM website;
- Driving the social media presence for ASM events, particularly our annual meeting;
- Maintaining an active online ASM community.

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And supported by:

- Ambassador training workshop
- Ambassador booklet
- Online community
- Social media roster

2023 Ambassadors

Abhay Chopra, Binod Rayamajhee, Nicole Bzdyl, Melinda Ashcroft, Rebecca LeBard, Sam Manna, Sarah Giles, Sher Maine Tan, Umme Laila Urmi and Xavi Bertran Forga

We welcome a new diverse cohort of communications ambassadors

They represent 5 ASM branches

The ambassadors have an ASM communications ambassador booklet to support them, and have profiles and a group on the ASM online community for engagement.

What We Highlight:

ASM Hour

STA Communications

Branch events

Job advertisements

MA Articles

Conference info eg. Microseq, BacPath and AusMe

ASM Online

Ambassadors communicate and resources are shared through our ASM online community.

How Can We Help You

- Keen to share some news or an event?
- Please provide (1) 1-2 lines of text (2) an image and (3) a link if relevant
- Tweet from your account and tag us!
- Send the details at least a week prior as most posts are scheduled
- We cannot share PDFs on social media, but you are welcome to post them on the ASM online community

This will be my last AGM as VP Communications. I would like to thank everyone for their support over the last few years. I am thrilled to hand this role over to Sam Mana who I'm sure will do a fantastic job.

Accepted all reports: Proposed by Sam Manna and seconded by Martina Sanderson-Smith

Note there were two proxy votes received (Mark Willcox and Brendan Crabb) – both voted for accepting motion.

8. **Presentation of the Financial Reports by the Vice-President, Corporate Affairs Prepared and presented by Anthony Baker**

NATIONAL FINANCES

Society and Research Trust annual financial and audit reports are available on the ASM website. I'm not going to break them down with granularity, but more provide a high-level overview of where we sit. Martina and I will be happy to discuss in greater detail with anyone who has an interest in the finances. The ASM holds two

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diverse investment portfolios which we have invested with Morgan's Financials. These portfolios are the ASM society itself (which is the financials with which we operate the society) and the ASM research trust (which is an independent trust account originally set up to fund research projects, but which we use to fund awards and speakers as we can all attest that research costs a lot of dollars these days). Both portfolios are diversified and managed by Peter Jongebreur.

The current market value of the society's (that is the ASM as a society; the financials we have to operate with) holdings with Morgans is \$1.04M, a \$40k increase from this time last year. These shares cost us about \$550k when purchased a decade ago, so they have performed exceptionally well for the society. Our forecast income from these shares is 3.71% and \$38,000 per annum. This is down very slightly from last year's performance (3.97%) but is a reflection of the global market. Very important to note that inflation is currently running higher than this percentage, so the growth of the portfolio needs to be monitored carefully.

Total members equity in the Society which includes Morgans investments, cash reserves, operating budgets etc at EOFY was \$1.56M, which is down from last financial year (\$1.68M) by about \$120k, but this doesn't paint the whole picture as we moved/donated \$150k from the cash reserves to the Research Trust in the form of \$100k investment in the CBA and an additional \$50k in the NAB.

The Research Trust is also invested with Morgans financials, holding Australian fixed interest capital notes, preference shares and cash to a value of just over \$1.68M. The forecast income on this investment is currently 5.54% and \$91k.

STATE BRANCH FINANCES

All of our state branches are in a healthy financial status. The society contributed \$67k in Capitation across the state branches for activities. We pay Capitation at 20% of total membership income.

On that note, we are here to support you, our members. If you have any ideas for events, functions, support, workshops etc, please let your state branch chair or a member of your executive know.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership sitting at 1,495 which may seem low, but is a reflection of all memberships expiring and renewing on the same date. We'll see this figure rise throughout the year. We're here today also to vote for a change to the constitution (later in the agenda) in the way we handle membership dates from the same annual renewal date for everyone to an individual date, for example as you would for your car registration or insurance. If you haven't paid your membership fees, please log in and pay them. Also, it's a good idea to check all your details are correct in our system while you are there.

On the topic of membership fees, we have not raised them in (I think) about five or six years. The cost of living has gone up, the cost of events has gone up, the cost of running a society has gone up. Our goal is to keep the fees as low as possible. We have kept our fees unchanged, however we will continue to review them.

**Accepted report: Proposed by Mark Davies and seconded by Julian Rood
Note there were two proxy votes received (Mark Willcox and Brendan Crabb) – both voted for accepting motion.**

9. **Office Bearers for 2023/2024**

The position of President Elect was advertised in accordance with our constitution and by-laws. We received one nomination and that was for Mark Schembri to extend his Presidency for another 2 years. This was approved by Council.

In accordance with the ASM constitution, and the by-laws, we can announce our office bearers for 2023/2024.

*Mark Schembri, President
Martina Sanderson Smith, VP Corporate Affairs
Hayley Newton, VP Scientific Affairs
Sam Manna VP Communications
Dena Lyras, Past President*

We would like to thank Anthony Baker, Kate Seib, Rebecca LeBard for their fantastic service to the ASM over many years.

10. **Changes to the Constitution regarding payment of annual fees.**

- **Background** - Since membership fees are payable on or before 1st April each year, we are discouraging potential new members from applying later in the year (as they don't get full value of a 1-year membership). We are seeking approval to make the following change to the constitution to give us the flexibility to charge membership fees at any time of year –

- **Current wording in constitution:**

14. FEES AND ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

14.1 All Members must pay the annual subscriptions determined as payable by the Council for their class of membership.

14.2 Council may in its discretion determine administration fees payable by each class of members.

14.3 All subscriptions are payable on or before 1 April each year.

- **Suggested change to constitution:**

14.1 All Members must pay an annual subscription determined as payable by the Council for their class of membership.

14.2 (no change)

14.3 All subscriptions are payable on an annual basis.

i. Motion: "That the changes to the Constitution regarding payment of annual fees (Agenda Item 10) be accepted."

**Motion Accepted: Proposed by Peter Traynor and seconded by Andrea McWhorter
Note there were two proxy votes received (Mark Willcox and Brendan Crabb) – both voted for accepting motion.**

11. **Determination of Annual Subscription Fees**

No increase to membership fees for the next membership year.

Motion Accepted: Proposed by Jon Iredell and seconded by Mark Davies

Note there were two proxy votes received (Mark Willcox and Brendan Crabb) – both voted for accepting motion.

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12. Appointment of the Auditor

The motion: *"That the auditor is reappointed."* Eric Townsend was put forward

Motion Accepted: Proposed by Anthony Baker and seconded by Kate Seib

Note there were two proxy votes received (Mark Willcox and Brendan Crabb) – both voted for accepting motion.

13. Closure of the Meeting

The meeting closed at 1.53pm