



Dena Lyras
President of ASM

Last year was a very difficult year for many of you, and the anxiety, lockdowns and travel restrictions that we faced left us feeling unsure and grieving for a world we lost. We were all disappointed by the unprecedented postponement of our meeting in 2020. Until a few days ago, we thought that we would be able to hold our 2021 meeting in a face-to-face format – it is crushing that we now cannot do that. I am sad and upset that we will not be able to come together this year in the way we had anticipated.

However, a positive outcome from the restrictions of the last year was the development of excellent online conferencing tools. Our meeting this year was to be our first hybrid meeting, with the expectation that it would be delivered both face-to-face and online. Our contingency planning involved the scenario which has arisen and we have therefore switched the conference to a full online format, which also allows regional members and those not able to travel to attend the meeting. This conference format is new and gives us the opportunity to learn and socialise in different ways. I anticipate that some things will work and others will need refinement – we are all learning as we go!

I am proud of the hardworking and dedicated Local Organising Committee team which has spent the last three years putting together a wonderful and diverse scientific and social program for our enjoyment. I would like to congratulate and thank them for their tireless work during a very difficult few years, and sympathise with them over our thwarted plans.

I would also like to thank our Scientific Executive Committee, State Branch Committees, and EduCon Committee for their work towards developing and delivering online events; their efforts have gone a long

way towards bringing our community together during a very difficult time and will bring lasting change to the Society.

I also encourage you to attend the World Microbe Forum, a worldwide online meeting being held on 20–24 June 2021 (<https://www.worldmicrobeforum.org/>). The theme of this meeting is Microbial Science Knows No Borders and it is a collaborative effort between nine Microbiological Societies from around the world, including ours, and discounted registration is available to our members. I thank A/Professor Kate Seib for the prominent role she has played in leading the organisation of the Australian arm of this meeting. The program is diverse and has something for everyone – do take a moment to have a look at the program on the website.

Finally, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the recipients of our ASM awards for 2021. Please take a moment to view the gallery featuring our award recipients on our website. You can read a short biography of each recipient by clicking on their photo and we provide links to their LinkedIn profiles so you can easily send them your congratulations. Our winners are as follows – congratulations!

David White Excellence in Teaching Award – Meredith Hughes

Frank Fenner Award – John Atack and Nichollas Scott

Jim Pittard Early Career Award – Danielle Ingle and Jennifer Wood

Distinguished Service Award – Melissa Brown, Deirdre Mikkelsen and Jacqueline Schooneveldt

Teachers Travel Award – Thiru Vanniasinkam

Nancy Millis Student Awards – Laurine Kaul, Cheryl Sia, Elizabeth Peterson, Sarah Cahill, and Korakrit Imwattana

Don't forget to go to our new ASM Community portal, which allows members to connect with one another, to join special interest groups, have discussions with members who have similar interests, and to keep up to date on all ASM matters. To join the ASM community, go to <https://community.theasm.org.au/> and click on the icon at the top RHS of the screen to set up your profile. Select 'Communities' from the banner menu to join a Special Interest Group community. Our other platforms, including our website www.theasm.org.au, ASM on Twitter, @AUSSOCMIC, or on Facebook, are also very active. We encourage and welcome your engagement using any option that suits you.

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