



Dena Lyras
President of ASM

As we progress through 2020, Microbiology is dominating the news with the emergence and rapid dissemination of the novel coronavirus COVID-19. The impact of COVID-19 on public health, with significant financial, logistical and social repercussions, has quickly become apparent, and is evolving rapidly in Australia. As microbiologists we have an important role to play during this time because we can use our knowledge, expertise and experience to educate the community around us, and to reduce the panic that results from fear and misinformation. It is also critical that we ensure that individuals are not stigmatised because of their perceived role in the transmission of this infectious disease. A co-ordinated global effort is required to tackle this new infectious threat, and we are an important local part of this effort. Indeed, our public health, medical, teaching and research communities have responded in a remarkable way to protect us against this pandemic, and we are grateful for everything that they are doing.

Unfortunately, due to this evolving global pandemic crisis and its escalation in Australia, the ASM Executive has decided to postpone the Annual Scientific Meeting, ClinCon and EduCon, that were due to take place in July 2020. We did not make this decision lightly and it was essential for us to adopt a responsible stand and to show a duty of care to our members. Executive knows that enthusiasm for the conference had gained momentum as the Local Organising Committee worked hard to build an engaging and exciting program. This was a very hard decision to make. We regret and

apologise for this postponement but we look forward to seeing you at our next Annual Scientific Meeting and will communicate our new plans as soon as possible. I would like to thank the local organising committees for their work towards delivering the three events, and to reassure them that their efforts will go a long way towards our future planning.

On a related note, bringing our discipline to the attention of the public and the government at this time is more important than ever. To this end, the chair of our South Australian/Northern Territory Branch, Peter Traynor, has been instrumental in lobbying for the establishment of a Parliamentary Friends of Microbiology group. The Australian Society for Microbiology warmly welcomes the reaffirmation of the Parliamentary Friends of Microbiology, in the 46th Parliament, and we gratefully acknowledge the interest of our Federal parliamentarians and their staff in matters pertaining to our discipline, across its broad range of areas. It is intended that this Group will provide a non-partisan forum for MPs to meet and interact with academic, clinical and scientific microbiologists on matters relating to infectious diseases, biosecurity, public health, veterinary and agricultural microbiology, food safety, epidemiology, and research and innovation. We look forward to enabling their knowledge, context and understanding of all matters microbiological, particularly at this important time when infectious disease is dominating news headlines and creating overwhelming community and public health concern. Please see the following link for more information: https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Friendship.

As always, please visit our website www.theasm.org.au to access information regarding upcoming meetings and awards. Note our fresh new website, which is easier to navigate and currently showcases content created by our wonderful ASM Communication Ambassadors. You may also like to follow, and contribute to ASM on Twitter, @AUSSOCMIC, or on Facebook to make sure you keep up with the latest news, trends and developments in Microbiology in Australia and around the world.

Have you heard of APPRISE?

It is the Australian Partnership for Preparedness Research on Infectious disease Emergencies. APPRISE says 'Pandemics are unavoidable' and lists seven ways their research can save lives.

These include supplying the latest information to decision-makers, investigating the first few hundred cases of each new pandemic, working with communities, improving national and international data sharing, boosting our infectious disease research workforce, improving infection prevention in hospitals and fast tracking trials of new treatments.

APPRISE works on a range of high-impact pathogens, for example, SARS-CoV, MERS CoV, EBOV, and Zika virus.

Check out their website: www.apprise.org.au to see their collaborating institutions, projects, and latest news.