

Vertical Transmission



Mark Schembri
President of ASM

As we close in on the end of 2023, it's a good opportunity to reflect on some of the things that have happened in the ASM this year. Our leadership team has undergone significant change with the appointments of Hayley Newton (VP Scientific Affairs), Martina Sanderson-Smith (VP Corporate Affairs) and Sam Manna (VP Communications), each of whom have been serving in a VP-Elect position for the last 12 months and learning the role. It is a testament to our processes that this transition has been seamless, and I look forward to exciting times ahead working with our new team. On that note, I cannot let this moment pass without paying enormous thanks to our retiring Executive Committee VP members Anthony Baker, Kate Seib and Rebecca LeBard. Anthony, Kate and Rebecca served on the Executive Committee for the last 5 years and, together with our immediate-past President Dena Lyras, can take collective credit for placing the Society in such a strong position.

There are many ASM activities to highlight from this year. Our national meeting in Perth was a huge success, with excellent attendance and a fantastic mix of invited talks, symposium sessions, award lectures, student and Early Career Researcher award talks, networking sessions and interactive poster sessions. We introduced two new awards, the ASM Industry Engagement Award and the ASM Early Career Microbiology Educator Award, both of which will continue to be offered. Our CliniCon and EduCon meetings were also successful, with the CliniCon meeting for the first time running in parallel with the national conference and providing new interaction opportunities for our members and trade exhibitors. We launched our new Equity,

Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Standing Committee, chaired by Dr Yogitha Srikhanta from Monash University.¹ You can read more about the EDI committee in this issue. We also kicked off an initiative to engage with politicians through a newly established Parliamentary Friends of Microbiology group, 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. Finally, ASM Hour continues to thrive, and our State Branches and Special Interest Groups ran many engaging programs. I look forward to seeing all of this continue and progress in the new year.

In September, I had the opportunity to attend the ASM TriState meeting in Darwin. The meeting was chaired by Janessa Pickering and Justin Morgan from the Western Australian ASM Branch, with 47 delegates from across Australia in attendance. This was my first time at the meeting, and I thoroughly enjoyed the engaging program, fantastic talks and networking opportunities. The venue and relaxed setting made for a great conference, and I strongly encourage you to consider putting this meeting on your calendar in the future. I also attended the South Australian ASM Branch AGM last month. It was fun to catch up with everyone in Adelaide and talk microbiology. This was also an opportunity to begin planning for the 2025 ASM National Conference, which will be held at the Adelaide Convention Centre. Stay tuned for more news next year.

As this is my last VT for 2023, I wish you all a safe and happy festive period and a fantastic New Year. There is still plenty to do in the next few weeks, but once we do wind down, I hope you get the opportunity to spend some quality time with your family and friends, and use the holiday break to relax and refresh.

Reference

1. Srikhanta Y (2023) New committee to guide ASM's diversity and inclusion strategy. *Microbiol Aust* 44(4), 213–213. doi:10.1071/MA23061