



Dena Lyras
President of ASM

Since this is my first communication with you this year I will start by wishing you all a happy new year and extend my best wishes to all of you for 2021.

We begin 2021 in a place that none of us had anticipated a year ago. In my letter from a year ago I talked about our upcoming annual meeting and other exciting events that were scheduled for 2020. COVID-19 had just started appearing in Australia, but we did not expect the disruption to our lives that this virus would unleash. The anxiety, lockdowns and travel restrictions of the last year, which are continuing in 2021, have left us feeling unsure and grieving for the world that we have well and truly left behind. But we also have much to be grateful for, especially when we consider transmission rates and deaths that other countries have seen that did not occur in Australia. Last year we thought we may not be able to develop vaccines to fight COVID-19, but we now have a number of excellent and safe vaccines that are being deployed in Australia and globally. This will allow us to return to a version of pre-COVID-19 normal, but I believe there are many innovations that developed rapidly in 2020 that will stay with us in 2021 and beyond.

What does this mean for the ASM? During 2020, we worked hard to develop online events to make up for the postponement of our annual meeting. We introduced ASM Hour, held virtually on the first Tuesday of every month and covering a different theme every time, with a number of experts speaking and answering questions. This has been a very successful format with high attendance rates. It has also allowed regional members and those who are not able to travel to attend; thus, we have found a solution to a problem that the ASM Executive had been trying to solve for many years. The annual meeting in 2021 (31 May to 3 June in Melbourne) will have a similarly inclusive flavour because it will incorporate both a face-to-face and virtual format (see <https://www.theasmmeeting.org.au/> for details), with many registration formats available to suit the needs of our members. Please register and participate in any way that suits you; we are so pleased that our community will have this opportunity to be together and look forward to seeing you all there – in person or *in silico*!

We are also delighted to announce that our new ASM Community portal is now open and very active! This allows members to connect with one another, to join special interest groups and 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.

Breaking Research

Call for Expressions of Interest

Early career (less than 5 year's post-graduation) and student researchers who would like their area of research to be featured in *Microbiology Australia* are invited to contribute a proposal of their articles and its impact.

The Editorial Board will select up to 10 articles for invited submissions. Articles will be peer reviewed and feature in the third issue of 2021.

As a guide, the article should be up to 1500 words, be targeted to the wider community of Australian microbiologists and should describe the author's original research. Articles will go through the normal process of peer review and editing.

Please send Expressions of Interest (EOI) to editorasm@gmail.com before July 2021 and include suggested title, name of contributor and contact details, (name of supervisor for students and a brief CV listing graduation year for early career researchers), and a brief abstract of less than 200 words.

All contributors must be members of the *Australian Society for Microbiology*.