

ASM2021: event report

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The Victorian Local Organising Committee (LOC) and the Australian Society for Microbiology (ASM) Executive are truly delighted to have been able to hold the 2021 ASM Annual National Scientific Meeting and Trade Exhibition (ASM2021), from Monday 31 May to Thursday 3 June 2021. Although we collectively had high hopes (especially after the postponement of the ASM2020 Meeting) of delivering this year's Meeting in hybrid (in-person and online attendance) format from the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Center, the imposition of COVID-19 restrictions in Melbourne just 4 days prior to the commencement of the Meeting required rapid transitioning of the Meeting to wholly online delivery.

This year's Meeting delivered a diverse and stimulating scientific program, which featured many leading microbiologists from around Australia and globally presenting their latest research findings, as well as 2 years' worth of ASM award winners' presentations. The program was rounded out by inclusion of the online poster sessions, Rubbo Oration and celebration, Student and Early Career Researcher events, and the trade exhibitions and social functions. Despite the online format, selection and building-in of the delegate-focussed online delivery platform during the early stages of planning by the LOC for the Meeting ensured there was plenty of opportunity for discussion, interaction and re-connection with colleagues.

The Meeting kicked-off at noon on Monday with a Public Lecture by Nobel Laureate Professor Peter Doherty, who insightfully explored *The journey so far with COVID-19, and where [to] next?* The public lecture can be viewed at ASM's link: www.theasm.org.au. Professor Doherty's lecture was then followed by the formal Meeting Opening Address and the presentations of the 2020 ASM Fenner, Pittard and Gilbert Award recipients, as well as the presentations of the 2020 Nancy Millis Award recipients. The evening's Bazeley Oration by Professor Daniela Ferreira, in which she explored the makings of the Oxford COVID-19 vaccine, rounded out a stellar sequence of presentations on the opening day of the Meeting.

Tuesday's program featured the Student and Early Career Researcher (ECR) events, including the presentations of the 2021 Nancy Millis Student Awards and the Nancy Millis Student and ECR lunch. The day's program was rounded out by presentations from the 2021 Fenner and Pittard Award recipients, and an opportunity to



interact and re-connect with colleagues via the super funky *SpatialChat* platform used in the concluding social function of the day.

Wednesday's program featured the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the ASM, and the Rubbo Oration, by Professor Eddie Holmes. Professor Holmes' presentation was an excellent and engaging overview of the evolution and emergence of RNA viruses, including the SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) virus. The evening wrapped up with the Rubbo Celebration, which allowed those keen to test their trivia knowledge via a *Kahoot!* quiz before proceeding to the concluding social function.

In addition to the many opportunities for discussion, interaction and re-connection with colleagues embedded into the Meeting's program, opportunities to interact and engage with the many trade exhibitors and sponsors was also provided via the online delegate platform. We sincerely thank our trade exhibitors and sponsors for their ongoing support and participation in the Annual Meeting.

Delivery of this year's Meeting, the first-ever wholly online ASM Annual Meeting, represents the culmination of almost 3 years of work for the members of the LOC (inclusive of the LOC's work developing the ASM2020 Meeting which was postponed due to the pandemic) - this truly has been a heroic, team effort! I would like to take this opportunity to thank each team member for their 'above and beyond' efforts over the last few years, in developing and delivering (the ASM2020) and ASM2021 Meetings: Maria Liaskos, Steve Petrovski, Catherine Satzke (Scientific Program Committee), Christine Seers (Workshops), Sarah Baines (Students & ECRs, Social/Bits'n'bobs/Advertising), Jacqueline Heath (Posters & Awards, Workshops), Mary Valcanis (Posters & Awards, Social/Bits'n'bobs/Advertising) and Lauren Zavan (Students & ECRs).

On behalf of the LOC, I also thank and acknowledge the support of the ASM Executive and in particular Dena Lyras, Kate Seib and Anthony Baker. I also thank the team from ASN Events (especially Kara Barker, Alycia Manuel, Gemma-Ann Taylor and Nitesh Patel) for their enormous efforts in organising this conference and flipping us so seamlessly wholly online just 4 days prior to the commencement of the Meeting!

We did it!