I am writing this just after returning from three weeks holiday so I would like to wish all members a happy and prosperous new year.

This issue contains important information about the Joint ASM/NZMS conference which will be held at the Aotea Centre in Auckland from the 28 September to 2 October 2003. This promises to be an excellent conference and also a great opportunity to visit Auckland and New Zealand and sample some Kiwi hospitality. At our last joint meeting in Cairns the Kiwi girls did the Haka, so the challenge has been made.

Airfares between Australia and New Zealand are presently ex Sydney $700, Melbourne and Brisbane $750, Adelaide and Hobart $1000, Perth $1100 and Darwin $1400. These are not much more expensive than holding the conference within Australia and I believe that quality of science and experience of attending the Auckland conference would be well worth the effort. So I look forward to seeing as many Australians as possible in Auckland.

On behalf of Julian Rood I am delighted to welcome the following to the National Scientific Advisory Committee (NSAC) as 2005 Divisional Chairs: Division 1: Dr Ruth Foxwell (University of Canberra), Division 3: Dr Ipek Kurtböke (University of the Sunshine Coast) and Division 4: Dr Naresh Verma (Australian National University). The Division 2 Chair, Bill Rawlinson, was appointed in 2002. NSAC, in conjunction with local organisers and the SIGs, has been instrumental in formulating the scientific programme for both the Auckland and Sydney conferences.

The Standing Committee on Clinical Microbiology has been revived under the leadership of Stephen Graves and will consist of the following members – Jock Harkness (NSW), Jan Lanser (NSW), Michael Leung (WA), David Looke (QLD), Dr Geoff Hogg, Dr Penny Bishop, Dr Gary Lum, Dr Ruth Foxwell, Dr David Nichols, Prof John Mackenzie, Dr Ailsa Hocking, Prof Tom Riley, Prof Duncan Veal.

I would like to draw special attention to the David White Teaching Award, which was not given last year. This is a very prestigious award and I would encourage members to nominate your teachers. ASM awards are for the benefit of members so please consider applying or else nominating someone you know.

Why belong to ASM? To quote Frank Fenner, a founding member & past president:

The Australian Society for Microbiology is a professional society devoted to furthering the science of microbiology. As such, ASM is an organisation that greatly benefits microbiologists by providing a framework for professional development through networking, continuing education and in the establishment of codes of practice for microbiologists across Australia.
In joining the ASM, you join more than 3,000 Australian scientists, many respected nationally and internationally by their peers as leaders in their field. What better way of developing your career skills than by joining us.

Please encourage your colleagues to become members. Look at our website <theasm.com.au> for more details.

When writing this column I often wonder what members would like to hear about. I would welcome any news from members, in particular I would like to be able to acknowledge those who have made a contribution to the Society. On this note I would like to sincerely thank Stuart Hazell who is stepping down from the editorial board of MA. Stuart has made an outstanding contribution to the journal over a long period of time.

Lecturer in General Microbiology

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