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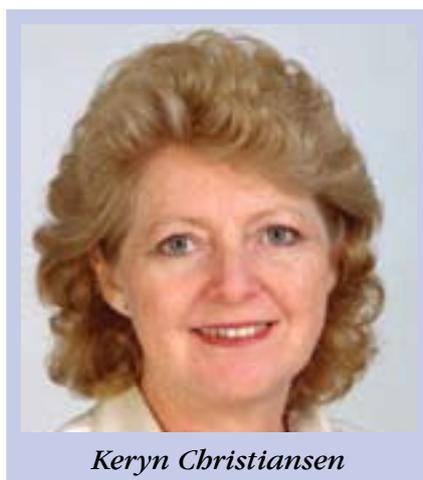
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Keryn Christiansen

I am honoured to lead the Australian Society for Microbiology over the next 2 years. I am committed to advancing the Society in its aims of furthering the science of microbiology, providing a forum for our members, fostering research and education, and promoting professional development of our members.

I am indebted to Julian Rood as he has provided excellent guidance during my year as President-Elect. Indeed, the Society is indebted to Julian. He has been an outstanding President. Julian played a major role in the formation of the divisional structure which has greatly enhanced the working of the Society. In addition, by providing advocacy in many fora, he has positioned the Society well for the future.

The first 6 months of my presidency and this first 'Vertical Transmission' will be devoted more to asking questions rather than expanding on my views of microbiology. At the recent Annual Scientific Meeting on the Gold Coast, I was particularly struck by the immense diversity of the Society. In preceding attendances I have moved mainly within my area of interest, clinical microbiology.

However, at this meeting, I spoke with many delegates from areas of microbiology far removed from mine. It was enlightening. There was much expertise, enthusiasm and commitment to research and education from areas as diverse as microbial ecology to food and veterinary microbiology.

I need therefore to find out more about our membership, to understand what you find most rewarding about the Society and what is missing. Does the annual scientific meeting meet your requirements? Do you feel adequately represented? Perhaps there are perceived conflicts - if so are they real and can they be resolved? How do we address the competing interests of diagnostic scientists working in the

private or public health sector with those in academic or research positions?

It may be that we have to think laterally. The ASM already supports smaller meetings dedicated to specific areas. Should there be more of these? Can we bring ASM expertise to more of our members by the use of online meetings or the use of podcasting for focused study groups? Should we be strengthening our relationships with other societies to enhance the laboratory/clinical interface? For a healthy, growing Society, we need to make sure all your needs are being met, that you have input into the future direction of ASM.

The Annual Scientific Meeting on the Gold Coast was a tremendous success and I enjoyed it immensely. The science was excellent, the social programme most enjoyable and the fellowship rewarding. Such success is a reflection of the hard work by the Local Organising Committee, the National Scientific Advisory Committee and the National Office. I thank Phil Giffard and his team and the National Office conference organiser, Janette Sofronidis, both personally and on behalf of the Society.

The meeting generated a great deal of media interest, particularly on the issue of biosecurity. This is an issue of national importance and the Annual Scientific Meeting of ASM was an excellent vehicle through which the issues could be debated and attention focused on deficiencies and funding problems. For our members who were unable to attend the meeting, we will endeavour to place the Rubbo, Bazely and Fenner presentations on the ASM website.

I look forward to working with the other members of the National Council Executive Committee, Hatch Stokes, Julian Rood and Silvano Palladino, with the National Council, the National Scientific Advisory Committee and chairs of both ASM Standing Committees and Special Interest Groups. The National Office staff (Chris Daly, Janette Sofronidis, Meg Lukes and Lina Raco) have already been extremely helpful and I know that I will enjoy my continuing interaction with them.

I will, over the up coming months, attend Branch meetings. As I visit each State I urge you to attend the meetings. I want your interaction. I want to hear your voice and I want to get to know as many of our members as possible. My predecessors have established a vibrant, sustainable Society; with your support I hope to add further to the advancement of the Society and to the discipline of microbiology.