



## The Australian Society for Microbiology Inc.

Unit 23, 20 Commercial Road  
Melbourne VIC 3004  
Tel (03) 9867 8699  
Fax (03) 9867 8722  
Email [admin@theasm.com.au](mailto:admin@theasm.com.au)  
[www.theasm.com.au](http://www.theasm.com.au)  
ABN 24 065 463 274  
For *Microbiology Australia*  
correspondence, see address below.

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### EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

Prof Ian Macreadie/Mrs Jo Macreadie  
Tel 0402 564 308 (Ian)  
Email [ian.macreadie@gmail.com](mailto:ian.macreadie@gmail.com)

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Simon Henriques, Cambridge Publishing  
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Fax (08) 6314 5299  
Email [Simonh@cambridgemedias.com.au](mailto:Simonh@cambridgemedias.com.au)

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## Vertical Transmission



*Prof John Turnidge*

President ASM

Many of you would have heard about the difficulties the Society has been experiencing in the National Office over recent months. We have had a number of resignations; first our executive officer, then our conference manager and most recently our office manager. As I outlined in the last *Vertical Transmission*, in order to cope with the resignation of our conference manager in May (two months before the Sydney meeting), we were required to call in an experienced professional conference organiser (ICMS) to ensure that the Sydney meeting did not suffer in terms of organisation over such a crucial period. Hopefully, you will agree that the meeting ran successfully given these circumstances.

Almost two months ago the Society's office manager of the National Office, Michelle Jackson, left us at very short notice. Again we sought the urgent assistance of ICMS to help us out, given that the remaining office employee was going on six weeks' leave. Some of you may have caught up with Janetta Stones from ICMS who has done a wonderful job for us in trying circumstances, and given the complexity of our organisation. The Executive has been required to help Janetta of course with the day-to-day activities, and I would like to personally thank the other three members of the Executive for the extra effort they have put in. In particular, our Vice-President Corporate Affairs has done an outstanding job dealing with a range of complex and ongoing issues, above and beyond the call of duty. Thanks enormously, Johnson Mak!

All these happening have brought the running of our Society into very sharp focus. The Executive and Council have started to discuss a range of matters about how our Society and annual meetings should be run. We are reasonably clear that we will not go back to employing our own conference manager. In the decade since we employed our own, the professional conference organising industry has matured considerably in Australia, and has at the same time become very competitive. It seems to us that outsourcing this function will be good for ASM now. The more difficult question is how to run the 'office' side of our business. The last decade has seen frequent changes of personnel in the office, and corporate memory, so vital for running a complex organisation like ASM, has all but evaporated. We welcome the views of the membership on this matter. Please provide your feedback though your branch or directly to the Executive!