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Vertical Transmission



Prof John Turnidge

President ASM

Full steam ahead

Since my last bulletin, we, the Executive, have made considerable progress in “steading the ship”. We now have arrangements with ICMS to manage our annual conference and run our national office until the end of August next year. This has resulted in a great deal of stability for our immediate future, and we expect next year’s budget (April to March) to be back in surplus. The Executive and Council also have agreed that we will go out to tender for conference and national office management in the next few months for a fixed period from September 2012.

The Executive and Council are currently debating the future of the national office real estate. It is intended that this will be put as a major item to the Annual General Meeting this year in Hobart. A discussion paper covering the options will be circulated to all members prior to the AGM. In the meantime, repairs to the office will be undertaken as there has been modest degradation in the state of repair of the property since its original purchase in 1993.

Just advertised is a new initiative commenced by Hatch Stokes, a joint ASM-NZMS research travel award. This award will complement ones already established with the American Society for Microbiology (the Millis-Colwell award), and the Society for General Microbiology in the United Kingdom (the Burnett-Hayes award). The award is open to ASM members to attend the NZMS meeting (NZMS would waive the registration fee) and spend time in a collaborating laboratory, and vice versa for New Zealanders.

Some senior ASM members have recently been active in trying to lobby federal politicians about proposed reductions in national research funding. A strong rumour has appeared that the federal government is considering a substantial reduction in NHMRC research funding. Many of you realise the implications of such a reduction. Research funding in Australia is proportionally quite low compared to other OECD countries. We would all wish Australia to increase its proportion of GDP allocated to research funding, not reduce it. Our best researchers need more support and certainty, not less.

Finally, I would like to thank the branch committees in the various states for their keenness to be involved in discussions about the future of ASM business. In the last couple of months I have had the opportunity to attend several state branch committee meetings to discuss what has been happening at ASM national office, and provide a more detailed description of not just what has happened, but why it has happened. The feedback that I had at these meetings has been extraordinarily helpful and positive. Our state branches are in some ways one of the most visible parts of ASM’s activities, and the branch committees are to be congratulated on their continued enthusiasm and interest in the proper running of the Society.