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President of ASM

The ASM's motto is 'Bringing Microbiologists Together'. We achieve this by holding general meetings – specifically, the Bistate, Tristate and Annual Scientific Meetings. I am a firm believer in the value of general meetings such as these, because I know from experience how much we stand to learn from colleagues who work in areas outside our own narrow focus of interest. Nevertheless, the inevitable sub-specialisation of microbiology into a wide range of fields has led to the formation of splinter groups and entirely new disciplines, whose practitioners may quite reasonably feel that, if they can attend only a limited number of conferences a year, they will gain most by meeting with experts in their speciality, be it virology, mycology, parasitology, bacterial pathogenesis, clinical microbiology, environmental microbiology, etc. This splintering, if left alone, may pose a threat to our Society and our profession, because it means we would be unable speak to the general public with one voice or to lobby politicians and other decision-makers effectively.

I'm not suggesting that we boycott specialist meetings, which obviously serve an important purpose. On the contrary, I think that ASM must work more closely with specialist groups within and outside our Society to ensure our meetings remain relevant to our members' needs. The inaugural AusME meeting that was held

in February this year is a case in point, as it was a meeting on environmental microbiology that was wholly sponsored by ASM. Another example is the Educon workshop for microbiology educators that is held each year in conjunction with our Annual Scientific Meeting.

In this regard, I am delighted to say that the Australasian Mycology Society (AMS) will be a joint-convenor of our Annual Scientific Meeting in Brisbane on 1–4 July next year. This will entail AMS holding some joint sessions and sharing at least one plenary speaker with ASM. The mycology conference is scheduled to finish the day after the General Meeting concludes, so that ASM members with a particular interest in fungi can satisfy their needs by remaining in Brisbane for an extra day. On 5 July, ASM will also convene workshops, instead of our recent practice of holding them on the weekend before the congress proper. On 5 July, we will also convene a bioinformatics workshop, which, like mycology, will be incorporated into the main meeting, as well as hosting separate activities.

I am also pleased to report that we are working with BacPath to consolidate our strengths in the areas of molecular bacteriology and bacterial pathogenesis in a way that will strengthen both ASM's General Meeting and the biennial BacPath Conference. We are also talking to the Australian Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (ASBMB) and the Australasian Society for Infectious Diseases (ASID) with the aim of holding occasional joint conferences with these Societies. Thus, our current focus is not limited to 'bringing microbiologists together', but biologists in general, in a way that will complement each other's strengths, expand our interests and perhaps foster new research collaborations. I envisage that by engaging with the wider biological community we will enrich our Society by providing many more opportunities for our members, irrespective of their special interests. I hope you will support ASM's initiatives by attending these forthcoming meetings.



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QUEENSLAND

1-4 July
Brisbane Convention
& Exhibition Centre
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The Australian Society
for Microbiology 
bringing Microbiologists together