



AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY FOR BIOPHYSICS

Website address

<http://www.biophysics.org.au/>

Newsletter 2003/6

ASB News

Welcome to the sixth and final ASB Newsletter for 2003.

Please note the coming [Membrane Protein Structure Workshop](#) in Melbourne on [February 6, 2004](#) with registration deadline in early December and limited numbers and the new ASB Reps for the ACT and Tasmania.

*Wishing you a very joyous
Christmas and New Year
Holiday Season*

Congratulations to [Professor Marcela Bilek](#) on being awarded another prestigious award, this time the [2004 Pawsey Medal](#) for her research in Physics. (see **Point 7** below).

I would also like to take this opportunity to wish you and your families and friends a very joyous Christmas and New Year season, an opportunity to recover from all the year's activities and stresses and a very worthwhile year in 2004.

With kind regards,

Peter

Peter H Barry, President, Australian Society for Biophysics

1. ASB Council Update

We wanted to welcome another two new members to council. They are the new ASB Reps for Tasmania, [Dr Ian Newman](#) and for the ACT, [Professor Angela Dulhunty](#), so that all states now have Reps. Full details of the ASB Council are listed at the back of this newsletter.

2. Workshop on Membrane Protein Structure

This workshop is being held on [Friday, February 6, 2004](#) in the [Walter & Eliza Hall Institute for Medical Research](#), 1G Royal Parade, Parkville (Melbourne), Victoria. This workshop will provide the opportunity to learn of the latest developments in a range of techniques relevant to membrane protein structures from both international and local experts. **We recommend**

6. ASB 2005

Currently we are investigating the possibility of a combined meeting with the Australian Physiological Society (previously APPS) in [Canberra](#). If that goes ahead, [Angela Dulhunty](#), the new ACT Rep, has agreed to be the local organizer with help from [Paul Smith](#) and others.

7. Australian Academy of Science News

With the concern at the drop off in interest in science amongst school students over recent years, the Academy has been exploring ways to contribute to science education in Australia and through the PMSEIC Working Group, has recently completed a report, entitled: “Science Engagement and Education, Equipping young Australians to lead us to the future”, and found at:

<http://www.dest.gov.au/science/pmseic/documents/Science%20Engagement%20and%20Education.pdf>.

The Academy's Newsletter, which also includes a list of the 2004 Academy Award winners, is available at <http://www.science.org.au/newsletters/aas57.pdf>. As mentioned at the beginning of this newsletter, congratulations should go again to [Professor Marcela Bilek](#), of the University of Sydney and also an ASB member, for getting the [2004 Pawsey Medal](#) for her research in physics.

8. Please periodically check our ASB Website for any up-to-date news items

(<http://www.biophysics.org.au/>) In addition for ASB members, if you have any images from your work that could be included, please consult Adelle (<mailto:A.Coster@unsw.edu.au>).

Meeting Reports & Other News

ASB members, please keep me up-to-date with any other news. Contributions are very welcome!

1. IUPAB update The next triennial International IUPAB Congress is in [France](#), in [2005](#) (see Item 7 in the following section).

Other Upcoming Events

2004

1. 48th Annual Meeting of the Biophysical Society (USA) - Feb. 14-18, 2004

The next (US) Biophysical Society meeting will be held in Baltimore, Maryland. Further details are at www.biophysics.org. [Abstract Deadline past.](#)

2. 2004 AAPS National Biotechnology Conference - May 16-19, 2004

in [Boston Massachusetts](#). [Abstract deadline Feb 4.](#) Further information at www.aapspharmaceutica.com/nationalbiotech

3. International Conference on the Science and Technology of Synthetic Metals (ICSM 2004). From June 28 - July 2, 2004, at the University of Wollongong.

Note: **Abstracts due: 30 Nov, 2003** and **cut-off for early registration: 29 Feb, 2004.**

Further details at <http://icsm2004.uow.edu.au> . Amongst the more than twenty invited Plenary and Keynote speakers will be at least 3 Nobel Laureates. A list of conference themes is on the website. Note the session on Biofunctional Materials. They are particularly keen to promote awareness of this event amongst Australian researchers, particularly young researchers and students. Local organiser: Daniela Ongarato (ongarato@uow.edu.au) ICSM 2004 Executive Officer, Intelligent Polymer Research Institute, University of Wollongong.

Registration will be limited to 1000 scientists from Australia and worldwide (including several Nobel Laureates), discussing the latest developments in Synthetic Metals with world leaders in the field. Synthetic Metals such as conducting polymers and carbon nanotubes are finding application in areas as diverse as artificial muscles, electronic noses, plastic solar cells, light emitting diodes, corrosion inhibition, biological and chemical sensors, electronic textiles and nerve cell communications. The overall conference theme will be: **Synthetic Metals: The role and impact of nanoscience and nanotechnologies**. See website (<http://icsm2004.uow.edu.au>) for more details.

4. The 5th International Conference in Biological Physics (ICBP2004) will be held from **August 23-27, 2004**. This will be held at Chalmers University of Technology & Gothenburg University, Gothenburg, Sweden, and that the call for abstract is open until May 31, 2004. Registration & Reservation forms and other information can be found on the Conference Website: <<http://fv.chalmers.se/icbp2004>>. The intended topics are divided in 11 subsessions: - Single molecule studies - Nanotechnology and surface science in biology - Biosensors and medical applications - Charge transfer in biomolecules, and photobiology - Structure and dynamics of biomolecules (Protein folding) - Dynamical models of DNA - Physics of subcellular structures - Modelling aspects of cell biology - Physics of the neural system - Evolution and origin of life - Complex systems in biological physics. A satellite meeting on (physical aspects of) gene regulation, DNA-replication, and cell cycle control will take place August 20-21, 2004, at the conference venue. See further information at the Conference Web site. The Scientific Secretary is Leif Matsson, Department of Applied Physics Chalmers University of Technology & Gothenburg University SE-41296 Gothenburg, Sweden

5. Lipid Signalling in Physiology held from Sep 8-12, 2004 in Woods Hole, USA. This will be the 58th Annual Meeting and Symposium of the Society of General Physiologists to be held at the Marine Biological Laboratory there.

6. Shanghai International Conference on Physiological Biophysics (Shanghai ICPB '04) will be held in Shanghai, China on November 9-13, 2004. For more details, please visit the conference web site after Jan. 1st, 2004: <http://www.ssbiophysics.com.cn/sicpb/>. Deadline for abstracts, July 31, 2004.

2005

7. XXXV IUPS 2005 Congress – “From Genomes to Functions”

Advance notice of the 35th Congress of the International Union of Physiological Sciences (IUPS). This will be held in San Diego, CA., March 31-April 5, 2005.

Website: <http://www.iups2005.org/index.htm>.

8. IUPAB 2005 Congress.

This will be held in Montpellier, France, on August 27 to September 1, 2005 as a joint meeting with EBSA (European Biophysical Societies Association). Other information may be obtained from their website: <http://www.iupab.org>.

Notices & Special Reports

National News

FASTS (Federation of Australian Scientific and Technological Societies)

Two media releases from Toss Gascoigne of FASTS are appended to the end of this ASB Newsletter

As you will see have seen from the last ASB newsletter, their new President will be Professor Snow Barlow, who will be taking over from Professor Chris Fell and the Executive Director, Mr Toss Gascoigne, will be leaving in January 2004.

Job Vacancies and Notices

We have implemented a Jobs page on the ASB website, which, as indicated above, is being looked after very ably by Adelle Coster (<mailto:A.Coster@unsw.edu.au>). Please send notices to her.

Note a new position for a Research Officer or Research Technician position in Protein Structure and Function at the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute in Melbourne. See ASB Website or contact Prof Ray Norton on <mailto:Ray.Norton@wehi.edu.au> or +61-3-9903 9650.

Peter H Barry

President, Australian Society for Biophysics

December 16, 2003

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Below is a media release from FASTS, issued on Saturday November 22 by Toss Gascoigne

Cautious response to proposed ARC changes

Australia's peak Council for scientists and technologists has responded cautiously to proposals to change the way research funding is handled in Australia.

Education Minister Brendan Nelson Minister flagged possible changes to the processes of the Australian Research Council (ARC). The proposal includes replacing the present expert advisory committees with a 'college of experts'.

The Minister has also suggested that there should be 'broad community representation on the new body that will be assessing future grant proposals'.

His proposals were contained in a media release issued on Friday. See: <http://www.dest.gov.au/Ministers/Media/Nelson/2003/11/n533211103.asp>

Professor Snow Barlow, President of FASTS, said scientists can see advantages in using a multi-disciplinary panel to choose projects for funding.

"Many advances come from multi-disciplinary approaches, and may for instance involve chemistry and biology working together to solve a problem," he said.

"But we would be concerned if people without the necessary technical knowledge were involved in a panel to choose which science projects should be funded."

He said that Australia has a world-beating system of peer review, and underlined the importance of encouraging excellence across a broad base from mathematics to humanities.

"FASTS is warmly supportive of involving the broad community in Australia's science programs," he said.

"The Australian public should be involved in selecting our national research priorities, and needs to be confident in the broad directions of scientific research.

"But we are puzzled about the role non-experts might play in choosing between often highly technical science proposals."

Professor Barlow said he would be writing to the Minister to seek clarification about the suggestion.

For interview: Professor Snow Barlow ph (03) 5833 9255; 0407 251 574

For information: Toss Gascoigne 0408 704 442

Below is a media release from FASTS, issued on November 26 by Toss Gascoigne

The Mapping Taskforce and science education

The Mapping Taskforce is set to hand down its report later this week, as one of a series of government reports into science and research.

But Australia's peak council for working scientists believes the Taskforce will have failed unless it addresses pervasive problems in the science education sector.

Professor Snow Barlow, President of FASTS, said the science education system had been labouring for some years. FASTS (the Federation of Australian Scientific and Technological Societies) represents 65,000 scientists and technologists.

"Australia is experiencing declining enrolments in the basic sciences and an aging teaching profession," Professor Barlow said. "The problem lies primarily in Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics.

"These are the building blocks of all science, and are fundamental to the creation of new industries and advances in health and environment."

The Mapping Taskforce was established following the Prime Minister's CEDA speech in November 2002. Among the issues it was directed to address were the development and retention of relevant skills for science, innovation and enterprise.

The Taskforce report, along with other studies, is expected to lead to a new Innovation Statement, son of 'Backing Australia's Ability'.

Despite their importance, the enabling sciences face a pervasive set of problems:

- ?declining enrolments at all levels of education
- ?an aging teaching population
- ?deteriorating staff student ratios
- ?a high proportion of biology teachers by international standards

These problems were documented in "Australia's Teachers: Australia's Future - Advancing Innovation, Science, Technology and Mathematics", issued early in November. The report will be presented to the Prime Ministers Science, Engineering and Innovation Council this week.

The recently released "Science in Decline" report of the Australian Council of Science Deans adds further strength to FASTS' call for urgent action.

"Our plans for an knowledge-based Australian economy are based on a science-smart, adaptive workforce. Unless Australia addresses these issues, we will have stumbled at the first innovation hurdle," Professor Barlow said.

For interview: Professor Snow Barlow ph (03) 5833 9255; 0407 251 574

Assoc Professor John O'Connor ph 0402 839 978