



AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY FOR BIOPHYSICS

Website address

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

Newsletter 2005/5

ASB News

Welcome to the fifth **ASB Newsletter for 2005**. The joint **ASB/AuPS 2005 Meeting in Canberra** was a great success. The scientific program covered many excellent and exciting topics presented by a large number of outstanding international and national speakers. It was also great to see excellent oral presentations given by students. The poster session included 48 posters of very high quality. The meeting was extremely well organised. Congratulations to Stefan Broer, Shin-Ho Chung, Louise Tierney, Nicole Beard and Paul Smith. Special thanks go to Adelle Coster and Dave Davey, whose help with the organisation of the meeting websites was invaluable. Warmest congratulations to the **2005 Bob Robertson Awardee, Professor Philip Kuchel** as well as to other ASB Awardees. Further information about the meeting, AGM and this year's Awardees are given below in **Item 3** and **Item 4**.

It was with some sadness that the scientific life and contributions by the late Professor Peter Gage were honoured and commemorated at the meeting. Please note in this Newsletter the **Obituary in honour of Professor Peter Gage** written by our Immediate Past President Em Prof Peter Barry and Professor David Adams, President of the AuPS (**Item 5** following).

Please also note the coming **Symposium on Malaria Protein Structure and Function** with registration deadline and limited number of participants (**Item 7** following).

With best regards,

Boris

Boris Martinac

President, Australian Society for Biophysics



1. The joint ASB/AuPS 2005 meeting

A combined meeting of the ASB with the Australian Physiological Society (AuPS; previously APPS) in Canberra was a great success. All scientific sessions were held at the Canberra Rydges Lakeside Hotel. There were about 200 registrants. A number of high-profile overseas speakers participated at the meeting, including Professor Francisco Bezanilla, Professor Stephen Korn, Professor Owen Hamill, Professor Masahiro Sokabe, Professor Eric Honoré, Assoc Prof Sarah Keller, Professor Nigel Unwin, Professor Peter Tieleman and Professor Amitabha Chattopadhyay, who contributed to the meeting with their excellent presentations as well as their participation in discussions throughout the whole meeting. There were also many excellent presentations by Australian speakers in symposia on “Ion Channel Gating”, “Functional Roles of Potassium Channels”, “Membrane Protein Structure and Interactions”, “Membrane Associated Proteins that regulate Muscle Contraction”, “Function and Regulation of Ion Transport Membrane Proteins” and “Epithelial Transport of Ions and Metabolites” as well as in free communications on “Exercise Physiology”, “Ion Channels”, “Ligand Gated Ion Channels”, “Skeletal Muscle Regulation: From Molecular Mechanism to Physiology in the Vasculature”, “Cardiac Muscle”, “Cellular Signalling”, “Muscle Physiology”, “Biophysics”, “Skeletal Muscle”, and “Systems Physiology”. In particular worth mentioning was the plenary lecture by Professor Angela Dulhunty, who gave an excellent overview of three decades of her research on excitation-contraction coupling. In addition, there were 48 posters of very high quality. Conference dinner at the Australian National Museum with good choice of food and wine was greatly appreciated by all who came to the dinner. Congratulations again to Stefan and his team for organising such an excellent and enjoyable conference.

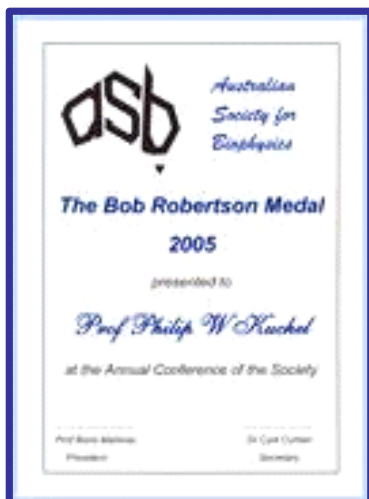
Photos from the conference will be soon available at the ASB website.

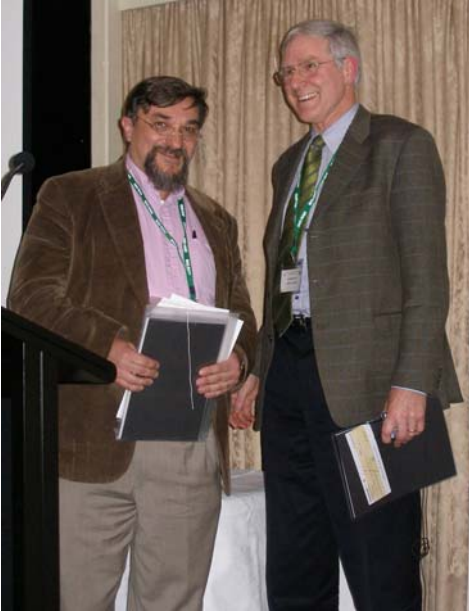
2. ASB 2006

Many thanks to all of you who came to our AGM in Canberra at which it has been decided that the next year annual meeting of ASB will take place in November 2006 in Sydney. As a Society we thank Mary Beilby and Hans Coster for volunteering to organize the meeting in Sydney.

3. Bob Robertson Award

This year the 2005 Medal went to **Professor Philip Kuchel**, who is an internationally recognized biophysicist, and one of Australia's leading theoretical and physical biochemists. Philip Kuchel is distinguished for his work on the application of NMR spectroscopy to biological systems. His wide research interests range from membrane transport, cellular substructure, dynamics and regulation of metabolic pathways to more recent interests in the relationship between molecular mechanisms of function to the structure of membrane associated proteins. He has contributed significantly to the practical development of the NMR spectroscopy and its basic theory. NMR spectroscopy has featured as his major research tool to





Philip and myself at the BR Award presentation.

explore fundamental biophysical processes in living cells, particularly the human erythrocyte. His most important discovery has been that of the 'split peak' phenomenon which he used to obtain the first measurements of transmembrane potentials and cell volume changes using NMR methods. More recently, his work in the area of cell metabolism has culminated in a book outlining a sophisticated computer model that describes the dependence of the rates of a large number of biochemical reactions on pH and cation concentration. Philip is also a devoted supervisor of his research students and a dedicated University teacher. For many years he has been an active member of ASB and has contributed to many meetings of the Society. In 1988 and 1989 he also served as a President of the Society. He is clearly a very deserving recipient of the Bob Robertson Award. As a Society we congratulate Philip on his award and wish him all the best in his future professional and private life.

Our thanks go to the members of the 2005 Robertson Award Committee: Professor Alex Hope, Professor Peter Gage, A/Prof Brett Humbly, Dr Adelle Coster and Dr Cyril Curtin as the non-voting secretary.

4. Young Biophysicist Award and Student Presentation Awards



From left to right: myself, Andrew Mynott, Ben Corry, Taira Vora and Philip Kuchel, who joined the young awardees for a group photo.

Congratulations to **Dr Ben Corry** (third from the left in the photo), from the School of Biomedical, Biomolecular and Chemical Science at the University of Western Australia, who was awarded the **2005 Young Biophysicist Award**. This year the **Student Presentation Awards** were made to **Andrew Mynott** (second from the left in the photo) from the School of Physics at the University of New South Wales and **Taira Vora** (fourth from the left) from the

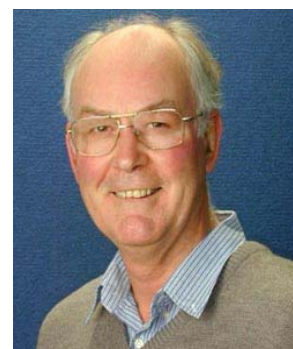
Research School of Physical Sciences and Engineering at the Australian National University. As a Society we again congratulate Ben, Andrew and Taira on their well-deserved awards and wish them success and happiness in their future careers.

5. Obituary to Professor Peter Gage

Professor Peter William Gage, FAA, DSc, PhD, MB ChB (1937-2005)

Awarded the Bob Robertson Medal for Biophysics in 2004

It was with a great sadness that we learnt that Peter Gage had died suddenly, but peacefully, on Saturday 13th August after a prolonged battle with illness, in the presence of his partner,



Angela Dulhunty, and his immediate family who all meant so much to him. He dearly loved his family and was most proud of his two sons, Peter and David, and his two daughters, Shelley and Jenny, and his 10 grandchildren. He had been suffering from acute myeloid leukemia, and after 4 rounds of chemotherapy earlier in 2004 had had a bone marrow transplant in November 2004. The transplant had taken well and Peter had even been able to start getting back into the lab with his research group periodically in 2005, and though there had been ups and downs in the recovery process with the graft-host interaction and the required immunosuppressant drugs, there was a lot of optimism, particularly given his fighting spirit. However, a sudden deterioration in his condition on August 11th signaled the beginning of the end of what had been a very productive life. Peter was a very warm, encouraging and *human* person, who was passionate about music, movies, tennis, their dogs and the outdoors. He will be sorely missed by a large number of current and former PhD students, post-doctoral fellows, colleagues and friends both in Australia and around the world, and his loss will continue to be felt for a long time to come.

Peter Gage did his undergraduate and graduate training in medicine at the Universities of Otago and Auckland, receiving his MB ChB degree from the University of New Zealand in 1960, worked in hospitals for two years, then moved to Sir John Eccles' department in the John Curtin School of Medical Research (JCSMR) at the Australian National University (ANU) in 1963 to do a PhD, which he received working with Professor John Hubbard in 1966. He joined Professor Paul Horowicz at Duke University, North Carolina USA as a post-doctoral fellow and then Assistant Professor to gain an excellent training in biophysics, working on muscle electrophysiology and synaptic transmission. He returned to Australia in 1968 to take up a Senior Lectureship in the School of Physiology and Pharmacology at the University of NSW, receiving a Professorial position (Personal Chair) in that School in 1976 until he left in 1984. During this time he was also made a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science (FAA) in 1977 and appointed as Director of a Centre of Excellence (Nerve Muscle Research Centre) at UNSW from 1982-1984. He then took up a position as a tenured Professor in the Department of Physiology and subsequently Division of Molecular Bioscience at the JCSMR at the ANU in 1984 till his death this year. From 1999-2004 he was also the President of the *Australian Physiological and Pharmacological Society*. In 2004, he was awarded the Bob Robertson Medal by the *Australian Society for Biophysics*, to recognise his outstanding contributions to the field of biophysics in Australia.

During his research career Peter Gage made an enormous contribution to biomedical research both directly and indirectly. He was acknowledged both from a national and international viewpoint as the leading membrane biophysicist in Australia, particularly in the area of ion channels. As Bertil Hille commented: "*For almost 40 years Peter was a leading practitioner and advocate for membrane biophysics in Australia. He had many students. He was imaginative and brave in his range of work.*" Peter has made outstanding original and highly significant contributions to the study of the biophysical properties of both ion channels and synaptic transmission. He has published more than 180 research papers, major reviews and book chapters, the majority being in leading international journals including *Nature*, *Science*, the *Journal of Physiology*, the *British Journal of Pharmacology*, the *Journal of General Physiology*, the *Biophysical Journal* and the *Journal of Biological Chemistry*, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science (USA)*, *Proceedings of the Royal Society (London)*, *Progress in Biophysics and Molecular Biology*, *FEBS Letters* and the *Journal of Virology*. The impact of his research is reflected in the fact that his publications had received >4,000 citations, with many receiving more than 100 citations each.

Peter was an inspiring research group leader and his contributions to Australian and international scientific research have also included the training of more than 30 PhD students, many of whom have gone on to establish strong international reputations, and a large number of former postdoctoral colleagues and close collaborators, whom he mentored, challenged and warmly encouraged with his enthusiasm and commitment to scientific research. In addition, he was always very ready to pursue leading-edge science and was the first, with the aid of his research colleagues, to introduce new techniques into Australia, such as the use of the voltage-clamp to record synaptic currents at the muscle end-plate, the use of the 3-electrode voltage clamp on muscle fibres, the first patch-clamp setup in Australia and the hippocampal slice technique, and then to share these techniques with other laboratories. He was also keen to understand basic underlying mechanisms and to explore them in a rigorous way, which over recent years encouraged him to combine electrophysiology with molecular biology, and provided an example for other groups to follow.

He also greatly contributed to the Australian research community by organizing patch-clamp workshops, numerous Curtin Conferences and a GABA 2000 international Symposium in Cairns. Peter was an excellent communicator, whether to the media or to colleagues, and further recognition of his research contribution was reflected in the numerous invitations for him to speak at international and national conferences, symposia and various academic institutions. He was an outstanding lecturer and popular with undergraduate students, and although they were challenged by the rigorousness of his biophysical approach, his lectures achieved the highest ratings from students.

In recent years, his research has continued to be at the forefront of the field with his structure-function studies on GABA_A receptors and the mechanism underlying the action of diazepam; his work on a series of virus proteins which form ion channels and the observation that drugs which block such channels can block virus budding; the characterization of the persistent Na⁺ channel in cardiac and hippocampal cells, its role in cell death during hypoxia and possible strategies to prevent this; and work on the modulation of the ryanodine Ca²⁺ channel in the sarcoplasmic reticulum of muscle and its importance for muscle contraction. He was the co-inventor of 2 patents and the founder of the biotechnology company, Biotron.

Given continuing health, the direct contribution of Peter Gage to significant research output had been expected to continue for many years to come. Unfortunately, that was not to be the case. Though his death will be acutely felt, both personally and scientifically, by the research community for a long time, the legacy of his contributions to Australian science and to the scientific community will continue on well into the future.

We are very appreciative of Peter's contribution to our lives and to scientific research, and our thoughts and prayers are especially with his family and close colleagues and friends at this time.

Peter Barry and David Adams, Sept, 2005

6. Ion Channel Modelling Workshop

The workshop was held [in conjunction with the AuPS/ASB meeting in Canberra on Tuesday, Sept 27th, 2005](#). It provided an introduction to a range of techniques used for modelling biological ion channels. The workshop, which was organized by [Dr Shin-Ho Chung](#) and his team, was very successful. Over 20 scientists (including myself) and

students participated in the workshop. On behalf of the ASB I would like to thank Shin-Ho for organizing this excellent workshop, which I hope will again be offered in the future to biophysicists interested in ion channels and membrane biophysics.

7. Symposium on Malaria Protein Structure and Function

The following is a notice on the upcoming **Symposium on Malaria Protein Structure and Function** that will be of interest to ASB members. The Symposium will be held on **Friday, February 3rd, 2006, in Melbourne**. The venue will be the Level 7 Lecture Theatre at the Walter & Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research.

This one-day Symposium will focus on the latest methods for probing the structure and function of Plasmodium proteins. Several applications of the results of such studies will also be presented. The Symposium will provide an excellent opportunity for parasitologists from a range of different disciplines to interact with structural biologists and protein chemists. It will operate as a satellite to the Lorne Conference on Protein Structure and Function, which will commence the following Sunday (February 5th). There will also be a session on malaria at the Lorne Conference. A website for the Symposium has been established, at <http://www.wehi.edu.au/news/events/MPSF2006/> . Registration is now open, at <http://registration.wehi.edu.au/MPSF>. It is recommended that you register early, as registration will be limited to 140 participants. There will be a poster session, with the number of posters limited to 30. For further information please contact: Maureen Grant: Email: grant@wehi.edu.au (Ph: +61 3 9345 2336) or Tony Hodder: Email: hodder@wehi.edu.au (Ph: +61 3 9345 2472). Ray Norton, Chair of the Organizing Committee, and his team look forward to welcoming you to Melbourne in February 2006.

8. Australian Academy of Science News

For general Academy news see their website at <http://www.science.org.au> . The Academy's latest Newsletter (April – July 2005, Number 62) is now available online. Please visit <http://www.science.org.au/newsletters/aas62.pdf>.

9. Lindau Meeting of Nobel Laureates

The National Committee for Biomedical Sciences (NCBMS), chaired by Professor Philip Kuchel, met on 24 August 2005 in Ian Potter House in Canberra to discuss a broad range of issues related to status of biomedical sciences in Australia. One of the items of the agenda was the Lindau meeting of Nobel Laureates that is organized each year in Lindau, Germany for graduate science students to meet Nobel Laureates from all science disciplines. This year graduate students from all over the world including Australia, were present at the meeting. Prof Kuchel was an honoured guest with the delegates from Australia. At the NCBMS meeting in Canberra Prof Kuchel gave a summary of his visit to Lindau whereafter the NCBMS discussed the selection procedure for future Lindau recipients from Australia and the need for a process to be in place for 2006 selection. The consensus was that the Lindau recipients should be called the 'Australian Lindau Scholars' and that nominations be limited to students in the last year of their PhD. The call for nominations will occur at the end of each year and selection of candidates is to be completed by March. The Committee felt that the Lindau meeting needs to be sold as a major national science promotion activity with students being ambassadors for science. The Academy will inform the relevant Societies and University Research Offices and individual supervisors to encourage suitable applicants to apply and will call for nominations from each institute via Dean of Post Graduate Studies. The procedure will include interviews of selected applicants. The nominating institutes are expected to pay travel costs for the nominated students to be interviewed in Canberra. The Lindau

Foundation will pay accommodation and registration costs of the selected student(s) for the Lindau meeting. Information about the scholarships will be available on the Academy web site, which will provide links to the Lindau web site. The Academy will advise university Deans of post graduate studies about the number of students finally nominated for selection. The selection of scholars will be made by an interview panel. The selection criteria will be based on the Lindau criteria, with some modifications.

10. FASTS News

- From the MEDIA RELEASE of the Federation of Australian Scientific and Technological Societies:

“Nobel Prize Celebrates The Brave And Unorthodox.

Australia’s science community is delighted that Barry Marshall and Robin Warren have won this year’s Nobel Prize for Medicine for their ground breaking discovery that bacteria cause ulcers, not stress. The President of FASTS, Professor Snow Barlow, said Marshall and Warren’s achievement exemplifies the practical real world character of Australian science. Their pioneering research has made a real difference to the lives of people all around the world and highlights, yet again, how investment in science and R&D pays for itself in spades. Marshall and Warren deserve every accolade as their work is an inspiring example of perseverance against orthodoxy and dogma. Their win is a salutary reminder that scientific research must be carried out in an environment where intellectual freedom is guaranteed and risk taking encouraged. This global recognition of Marshall and Warren’s contribution poses an interesting question that the Government and science establishment might like to dwell on: If Marshall and Warren were starting their research now, what likelihood they would pass the hurdles of quality, relevance, impact and commercialization? More broadly, it shows there must be a place in Australian society for people who take an alternate route. Professor Marshall’s determination to show bacteria caused ulcers, by swallowing a bacteria culture and then treating it with antibiotics, continues a brave tradition in science of following, quite literally, your gut instincts.

Years ago, three first-rate Australian scientists, McFarlane Burnett, Fenner and Clunies Ross, stunned the world by proving the rabbit virus, myxomatosis, could not infect humans by injecting themselves with the virus. All Australian scientists congratulate Professors Marshall and Warren and hope their achievement will inspire a new generation of young scientists and science students to think bravely and trust their instincts, concluded Professor Barlow.”

- A message from Prof Bradley Smith, Executive Director of FASTS:

“ 1. I would like to develop a more structured network of people working on science and R&D policy in the FASTS membership. I am aware that most science societies do not have the resources to employ policy and/or research staff, but if you do, could you let me know their name and e-mail contact (I suspect I am already in contact with most if not all but just in case someone has slipped under the radar...).

2. We have about 20 spots left for the third stream forum next Wednesday, 12th of October. If you do not have a representative attending as yet, and would like one of your members there, I would be grateful if you could get onto it ASAP. Registration details are on the FASTS homepage www.fastso.org .”

Anyone interested who would like and have time to attend and represent ASB at the “Third Stream Funding Forum” on Wednesday, 12th of October (9.30am – 4.00pm) Shine Dome - Academy of Science, Gordon Street, Acton Canberra please visit the FASTS homepage for registration and further details.

11. Tax-exempt Donations Request for the R N Robertson Fellowship

A reminder that donations to the above fellowship fund are tax exempt. For more information contact **Dr Hank Greenway** (<mailto:hank@cyllene.uwa.edu.au>) or see ASB Newsletter 2004/2.

12. 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, from now on please keep me up-to-date with any other news. Your contributions are most welcome!

1. IUPAB 2005

This year the International Biophysics Congress was held in **Montpellier, France, from Saturday, August 27 until Thursday, September 1, 2005** as a combined meeting of the International Union of Pure and Applied Biophysics (**IUPAB, 15th Congress**) and the European Biophysical Societies' Association (**EBSA, 5th Congress**).

The French partners were the Société Française de Biophysique and the Comité National de Biophysique. The Congress was very successful and very well organized. Montpellier not only provided a beautiful environment for a presentation of a broad range of highly interesting topics and scientific discourse during the conference but also for leisure and enjoyment of French hospitality and excellent food in local restaurants.



The next **IUPAB in 2008** will take place in **Long Beach, California**. At the Annual General Meeting in Montpellier the members of the Council have voted that the **IUPAB 2011** will take place in **Beijing, China**. A proposal for the IUPAB in 2014 in Australia was put forward by Prof Cris dos Remedios, representative of ASB at the IUPAB Executive Council. At our AGM in Canberra we all agreed on this proposal. As a Society we will have to start soon preparing for promoting Australia as a site for the 2014. In Montpellier I had the opportunity to discuss the 2014 IUPAB meeting with representatives from the Japanese Biophysics Society (JBS), who expressed great interest to join and help the ASB in organizing the 2014 meeting in Australia.

2. Agreement between the ASB and JBS

As previously reported, the agreement between the Japanese Biophysics Society (JBS) and ASB was signed in June, 2005. The agreement is expected to strengthen the relationship between ASB and JBS in the future. According to the agreement a member of each Society is eligible to participate in the annual meeting of the other Society at the member rate. The Agreement will initially be valid for five years. After the five-year period the agreement

will be renewed indefinitely provided neither Society wishes to terminate it. The agreement may also help in facilitating a joint organization between ASB and JBS of the IUPAB 2014 meeting in Australia provided that it becomes extended after five years.

Other Upcoming Events

2005

1. 43rd Annual Meeting of the Japanese Biophysics Society (JBS)

43rd Annual Meeting of JBS has been scheduled on November 23-25, 2005 in Sapporo, Hokkaido. The organizers are expecting more than 1500 participants from various Asian countries to attend the meeting. A joint Symposium between the JBS and ASB has been scheduled for the meeting. An English version of the Meeting profile that has been specially created for applications from Australia is available on the web at <http://www.biophys.jp/annual-meeting/index.html>. **The deadline for registration has past.** Those interested in the meeting please contact Dr Kaoru Mitsuoka from the Japan Biological Information Research Center (JBIRC) at biophys06@ni.aist.go.jp.

2006

1. 50th Annual Meeting of the Biophysical Society (USA)

Biophysical Society 50th Annual Meeting will be held in Salt Lake City, Utah on February 18-22, 2006. Further details are available at <http://www.biophysics.org/meetings/2006.htm>. Chair of the International Relations Committee of the Biophysical Society, Prof Ligia Toro, has invited international members of the Society to organize Satellite Meetings to the Biophysical Society Meeting in 2006. It is considered to be a great opportunity to increase international liaisons between the US Biophysical Society and biophysical societies in other countries, and to foster Biophysics around the world. For anyone interested, the criteria set by the Biophysical Society how to organize a Satellite Meeting can be found at <http://www.biophysics.org/meetings/proposal.htm>.

2. 31st Lorne Conference on Protein Structure and Function

31st Lorne Conference on Protein Structure and Function is scheduled for 5-9th February, 2006. Abstracts are now being called for. Submissions are invited for poster and/or oral presentations; a limited number of oral presentations will be selected from submitted abstracts. Applications for the Lorne Proteins Young Investigator Awards are also invited. Abstracts should be lodged on-line via the web site, where further details can be found. The deadline for submission, as well as the close of the early bird registration rate, is **NOVEMBER 11th 2005**. Two satellite symposia will be held on Friday, February 3, one on Malaria Protein Structure and Function and another on Protein Misfolding Diseases. Links to these symposia are on our website. Please visit also www.lorneproteins.org.

3. Single Molecule Biology

Single Molecule Biology meeting is scheduled on March 26-30, 2006 at Churchill College, in the University of Cambridge. Run by the Royal Society for Chemistry's Chemical

Biology Forum, this three-day meeting will feature all types of single-molecule experiment, and will include both techniques, which will display innovation and the application to important problems in biology. For further information please visit www.rsc.org/SingleMolecules .

4. ComBio 2006

ComBio 2006 is being scheduled to take place at the Brisbane Convention Centre on September 24-28, 2006.

5. The Structure and Function of Large Molecular Assemblies

The 38th crystallographic course at the Ettore Majorana Centre will be held in Erice, Italy on June 9 to 18, 2006. The purpose and further details of the meeting can be found at <http://www.crystalalice.org/2006.htm>.

6. 17th International Mass Spectrometry Conference

The 17th International Mass Spectrometry Conference will be held at the end of summer 2006 in Prague, Czech Republic. For details please visit <http://www.imsc2006.org/>.

Notices & Special Reports - National News

Job Vacancies and Notices

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

Boris Martinac
President, Australian Society for Biophysics,
October 10, 2005

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