



AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY FOR BIOPHYSICS

Website address

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

Newsletter 2008/1

ASB News

Welcome to the first **newsletter for 2008**.

2008 has already been a momentous year for Australian biophysics. Following 18 months of detailed preparation, I am delighted to announce that ASB has been successful in winning the right to host the International Union of Pure and Applied Biophysics International Congress in 2014 in Brisbane. I expect that hosting this meeting will be one of the largest activities ever undertaken by ASB, and it will certainly provide a major boost for biophysics, and biological sciences in general, with Australasia and the Asia-Pacific region.

Other highlights of this newsletter include:

- An innovative and generous new prize for the study of biophysics in Australia, the McAulay-Hope Prize for Original Biophysics.
- A report on the joint ASB/AuPS meeting held in Newcastle in December 2007
- Preliminary details of ASB 2008, to be held in Canberra in September
- A report on the participation of ASB in the annual FASTS Science-meets-Parliament activities.
- Australian biophysicists in the news.

Brett Hambly

President

Australian Society for Biophysics

1. Success winning the IUPAB 2014 Congress

As many of you will already have heard, ASB was successful in winning the right to host the IUPAB International Biophysics Congress in Brisbane in 2014. The IUPAB General Assembly was held in Long Beach on Monday 4 February, and, following a competitive bid presentation, Australia bettered Austria and Brazil, gaining 35 votes out of 58 in the first round. The Austrian bid was quite serious competition, but the Brazilian bid was fortunately a bit too preliminary.



The success of our bid is, of course, due to many factors. At the risk of forgetting someone, I will single out for thanks the following people:

1. The bid committee - all of whom contributed enormously to formulating the concept and strategy, the bid documents (and all their various parts), recruiting the supporting organisations etc.
2. Alison Gardiner and Trish Levey, the team from the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre, without whom we simply would have had little hope of success! I particularly note that BCEC have provided substantial financial support to the bid already, and their undertaking (along with Brisbane Marketing) to provide additional support was a very important contributing factor to the success of the bid. Equally important, Alison and Trish have been essential for providing advice and support to me during this long process, for which I am personally very grateful.
3. Mike Pickford from ASN Events - Mike's advice (honorary) has been invaluable on a wide range of issues and on many occasions, and he stepped into the breach at the 11th hour to formulate a detailed budget for us, when it became clear that this would be essential for answering some of the queries that were arising within the IUPAB Executive.
4. All the Australian scientists who came to the Reception for the IUPAB General Assembly held the night before the big vote. This reception (funded by BCEC - thanks!) was in my view critical for getting us across the line. The enthusiasm on the night from our Australian members/hosts really did make a big difference!
5. I would particularly like to also thank Cris dos Remedios, Frances Separovic and Ray Norton, whose ongoing advice and support has been, and continues to be, essential for navigating these complex waters.
6. Pierre Moens spent many hours getting the bid website up, and maintaining it - the website added the necessary additional touch of professionalism to the bid.

There are many other individuals, both on and off the bid team, who made considerable personal efforts to assist with all sorts of things, especially personal lobbying. Thanks to all of you!

Additionally, a number of supporting organisations had a major impact, especially Univ Queensland (via the DVC Research), AAS, ANSTO, AINSE, FABLES, ANZMAG, ARC CXS, AAPN, ASBMB, AuPS (and I am sure I have missed some).

Finally, where to from here? Well, we have six years; but I expect that this time will go by quite fast. My current plan is to form an interim Organising Committee, whose task will be to commence organisation up until 2011 (the next IUPAB Congress in Beijing). If we follow the lead set by Beijing, we will need to provide a briefing to the IUPAB Executive, Council and General Assembly during 2011, with considerable detail of the mechanics of the meeting. I

would suggest that we review the composition of the organising committee in 2011 (which may involve an expansion of the committee) for the last 3 years prior to the actual meeting in 2014.

An important footnote to the IUPAB General Assembly is that Cris dos Remedios (past President of ASB) was elected unopposed to the position of Secretary General of IUPAB. All else being equal, Cris can hold this post for the next 6 years, taking us up to the 2014 Brisbane meeting. This will be a great help for liaison etc in the organisation of the meeting. Congratulations Cris!

Once again, thanks to you all for all your help in this major endeavour on the part of ASB - I am hoping that having the Congress come to Australia in 2014 will provide a substantial boost to Biophysics here in Australia, both before and certainly after the actual meeting.

Brett Hambly

President and Leader of the Bid Team



2. The McAulay-Hope Prize for Original Biophysics

I am delighted to report to the Society that a very generous donation has been made to the Society to inaugurate the [McAulay-Hope Prize for Original Biophysics](#). The Original Biophysicist was initiated by a donation from one of the founders of the Australian Society for Biophysics, [Professor Alex Hope](#). The Society is enormously grateful for Alex's generosity.

Biophysicists are by nature innovative. Crossing the boundaries of many scientific fields, biophysics inherently calls for the development of new techniques, equipment and models. The McAulay Prize for Original Biophysicist is designed to [recognise true originality and innovation in the field of biophysics](#), rather than the use of existing techniques or applications.

The Prize comprises a medal and \$1000 to be used to promulgate and further develop the recipient's work and ideas. The recipient will be awarded the medal (and cheque) and will present a plenary on their work at the annual meeting. This Prize is not given each year but rather will only be [awarded when a truly original biophysicist is nominated](#) (and seconded) by members of the society (without self-nomination).

About Alexander Leicester McAulay

McAulay graduated from the University of Tasmania in 1916, joined the staff as a Lecturer in 1922 and was Professor of Physics from 1926 to 1959. His father was Professor of Mathematics and Physics before him! [McAulay was almost certainly Australia's first Biophysicist](#).

Here are a couple of impressions from Alex Hope's autobiography "Driven by Electricity" (Book One: "Growing up in Tasmania, 1928-52"). (On choosing an Honours programme in the Physics Department):

"He did not See a Ray of Hope in Optical Physics, Cosmic Rays were less than Cosmic, Theoretical Physics was - well, too Theoretical for a practical chap, leaving Biophysics with

Professor McAulay. This original man had pioneered in Australia the study of the mutations in yeast caused by Ultraviolet radiation. He now proposed a project to investigate the electric fields in and around plant roots and shoots, which he considered could be developmental forces in plant growth. Bioelectricity sounded fun to an electronics freak.

The Professor's style of supervision could be described as unconscious pressure. He probably did not realise the devastating effect of comments such as "Well, Hope, I'll come back when you have got it working" and his prompt striding away. He had visited the experimental setup just as problems were encountered, so we could not show progress. In his appearance, Prof McAulay was slightly eccentric; while others wore suits and tie (around the neck), he could be seen with tie as trouser belt, magnifying lens dangling on a string. A somewhat plummy English accent added to the total effect. "

McAulay later supervised the Ph.D. programmes of Alan Walker and Bruce Scott.

3. 32nd Annual Meeting of the Australian Society for Biophysics Canberra – 28 Sept – 1 Oct



First Notice

Conference Dates: September 28th – October 1st 2008

Venue: Australian National University.

Themes include:

- Ion Channels, Fundamental Issues and Regulation of Membrane Transport
- Protein structure and Dynamics
- Muscle Biophysics
- Biophysical Characterisation Techniques
- Plant Biophysics and Photosynthesis
- Membrane Biophysics
- General Biophysics
- Cellular & Molecular Biophysics and Bioengineering
- Biomolecules, biomaterials and biomimetics

Registration and Abstract Submission open May 2008

Nominations for the **Bob Robertson Award** open March 22nd

For more details see the [ASB Website](http://www.biophysics.org.au/) or contact Paul Smith (Paul.Smith@anu.edu.au)

3. 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 (web@biophysics.org.au).

Meeting Reports & Other News

ASB members, please keep me up-to-date with any other news. Your contributions are most welcome!

1. Joint ASB / AuPS 2007 Annual Scientific Meeting - Newcastle

Our ASB2007 Annual Meeting was a **great success**, held in Newcastle jointly with the Australian Physiology Society. The venue for the meeting, the heritage Newcastle Town Hall was an impressive venue for the meeting. The total number of attendees was 230, with 52 of those attendees being registered through ASB (quite a number of overlapping registrants had registered through AuPS). The meeting ran with a small profit. There were **184 abstracts** accepted for the meeting. Of the 12 Symposia, ASB specifically organized 3: Protein structure, interactions and dynamics (organized by Pierre Moens), Magnetic techniques in protein studies (organized by Louise Brown), and Artificial photosynthesis (organized by Tony Collings).



The 2007 **Robertson Prize** winner was **Prof Cris dos Remedios**, a former President of ASB. He delivered the Robertson Lecture, covering such themes as luck versus hard work in science, and the joy derived from discovery.



The 2007 **Young Biophysicist Award** was won by **John Gehman**, a Post-doctoral Fellow in Frances Separovic's lab at the University of Melbourne. Two **Student Prizes** were awarded, to Sophie Goodchild from Louise Brown's lab at Macquarie University and to Anthony Dona from the University of Sydney.



Finally, I would particularly like to thank Derek Laver, who expertly led the local organization committee for both Societies.



The [Annual General Meeting](#) for the Society was held in September 2007, to comply with relevant Company Law, but the substantive business of the Society was deferred to the Annual Scientific Meeting in December. Much of the meeting was spent considering the proposed bid for IUPAB2014, with Alison Gardiner from the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre updating the Society on the details of the bid. The [next Annual Scientific Meeting of ASB](#) will be in Canberra in September 2008 (see item above).

2. IUPAB Congress 2008 / US Biophysical Society Meeting

The [IUPAB Congress 2008](#) took place in [Long Beach, California](#) in combination with the [Annual Meeting of the US Biophysical Society](#) last [February 2-6, 2008](#).

The meeting was an outstanding success, particularly since the US Biophysics meeting is now the largest annual biophysics meeting in the world, with around 5,000 participants.

There were thirty seven presentations involving Australian participants at the meeting, with close to 100 scientists attending from Australia. Many of the Australian presenters are members of ASB.

3. Report on the IUPAB Congress and General Assembly, Feb 2008

The joint meeting of the US Biophysical Society and the IUPAB Congress was held in Long Beach, California from February 2 - February 6, 2008. An important part of the Congress is the General Assembly of IUPAB, which is the ultimate governing body of IUPAB. 56 delegates, representing all the national adhering bodies that form IUPAB made up the General Assembly. ASB was represented by Prof's Cris dos Remedios and Brett Hambly. The General Assembly was pleased to approve the request by the [Australian Academy of Science to up-grade its membership](#) from level 3 to level 2 (which gave Australia two delegates instead of one). This cleared the way for the second nominated delegate (dos Remedios) to become a voting delegate at the General Assembly.

At the General Assembly proper several reports were delivered from the heads of the Task Forces.

The assembly then elected a [new President](#), President-Elect, Secretary General, Treasurer and 11 members of Council, in that order. The position of President was contested by Professors Wilma Olson (USA) and Kuniaki Nagayama (Japan) and was won by [Professor Nagayama](#) in a close contest. The position of [President-Elect](#) was won after three rounds of voting by [Professor](#)

[Gordon Roberts](#) (UK). He will assume the Presidency at the end of Nagayama's three-year term in 2011.

Professor Cris dos Remedios (from ASB) was elected un-opposed to the position of **Secretary General of IUPAB**. He will serve for an initial period of six years.

The new position of [Treasurer](#) will be filled un-opposed by a nominee from France, and the eleven vacant positions on Council were filled after multiple rounds of voting. The IUPAB constitution precludes any one country of holding more than one elected position on Council or the Executive. Accordingly, the Academy's nomination of Professor Frances Separovic and a nominee of the Royal Society (UK) withdrew their nomination following the election of dos Remedios (Australia) and Roberts (UK).

The General Assembly then voted for the venue for the [IUPAB Congress in 2014](#), three years after the Beijing Congress in 2011. Australia, Austria and Brazil presented their bids to the General Assembly and the bid was **won by Australia (Brisbane)** in a clear majority decision on the first round of voting.

In summary, the General Assembly was a considerable success for the Australian Academy. On behalf of Professor Hambly and myself, I wish to thank the Academy for supporting our attendance at the meeting.

[Cristobal G dos Remedios](#)
[Incoming Secretary General of IUPAB](#)
 February 11, 2008.

4. FASTS Science-Meets-Parliament – Prof Angela Dulhunty

I attended the **2008 Science meets Parliament** (SMP) held in Canberra on the 18-19 March on behalf of the Society. It was an interesting and enlightening experience and my overall positive impression was that the members of the new Parliament with an interest in science were committed to research at all levels and particularly to a return to support for curiosity-driven research.

The SMP event was divided into two parts, the first on 18 March was held in The Members Dining Room in Old Parliament House and consisted of a number of talks, some about the concerns of the present government and several about the best way for scientists to approach politicians and the importance of press releases by scientists and the timing of such releases. There was a dinner on the first night with scientists and politicians at the same tables and opportunities for informal discussions.

On 19 March the day was devoted to more formal meetings between scientists and members. In general each scientist met with at least 2-3 different members usually in groups of 3 scientists with one Parliamentarian. There was a Press Club Lunch on the second day, with a speech by Kim Carr, which I expect many of you have seen or read. I'll briefly summarise some of the main points that arose on each of the days and from the individual meetings. My major interests were in the areas of support for curiosity-driven research (as opposed to support of research that fits into Priority Areas and National Goals etc) and of funding for science in universities. The following observations will strongly reflect those interests.

Terry Cutler, Chair of the Review of the National Innovation System, made an encouraging statement that the last few years represented an **“era of commercialisation”**, with less emphasis on knowledge base. His opinion was that the pendulum was swinging and that we were heading into an era of increased emphasis on knowledge base.

Bob McMullan (MP) spoke about the **government's current policy priorities** “policy through the prism of a new Labor Government”. Not surprisingly, the major policy areas of immediate concern to the Government are the big issues, particularly: (1) social justice issues such as the

price of food, water and energy and ensuring an appropriate income for the poor; (2) global power balance with the major power brokers being the US, Europe, China and India (not the US alone) and seeing Australia as a part of the Pacific rather than a misplaced Atlantic country; (3) coping with the era of people movement – disease management, quarantine etc; (4) global poverty; (5) balance in Federation e.g. should health be State or Federal. His point was that we (the scientific community) should keep these priorities in mind when approaching Parliamentarians and discussing the impact of our science.

There was talk about the **importance of press releases** and the timing of press releases. Susannah Elliot (Australian Science Media Centre) and Neil Byrne (science communicator) spoke about the fact that the impact of press releases normally fitted in with the agenda of the press not the scientist. Timing is all important, it is best to have press releases ready to put out in conjunction with relevant “hot” news items. It is also useful to have sent potential press releases to appropriate parliamentarians well before they appear in the media, so that the information can be absorbed and properly commented on. The Australian Science Media Centre is there to help scientists prepare press releases, decide which parliamentarians they should be sent to and when release is most appropriate.

Another subject that was fully discussed was the most effective **way to approach parliamentarians**. A liturgy of “whinging” is useless (quote - sounds like you just need a cuddle). It is best to present the “problem” and present a “solution”. Also not much point in going in demanding money – everyone does that and politicians are desensitised. Better to suggest a new policy – money will have to flow if it is taken on board. Speakers on this issue were A/Prof Richard Dennis (former staff strategist for Natasha Stott Despoja and Bob Brown) and Gail Morgan (former industry advisor for Kim Carr).

The dinner was held in the Great Hall of New Parliament House. The lamb shanks were great. The MC, Dr Clio Cresswell, should host a TV show. The guest speaker, Professor Neville Nicholls was impressively modest.

On day 2, I sadly missed **Kim Carr’s Press Club address** due to teaching commitments, but it was great to hear about his positive attitude towards universities, education, science and basic research, without detracting from the importance of commercialisation and goal-driven research.

The parliamentarians that I met with were very different. The first was **Guy Barnett, a Liberal Senator from Tasmania**. He is passionate about research into diabetes and obesity for personal reasons, but had a general interest in promoting science. Unfortunately Guy was called away frequently to divisions while we were talking so that face-to-face time was brief. The second was **Kate Lundy, who is a Labor Senator for the ACT**. Kate managed to spend 45 minutes with us (after 5-30 pm), with a very cute 6 year old in the next room who appeared from time to time. Kate’s first words were “you are talking to the converted” and that was right. She was passionate about science, about basic science, about increasing knowledge base, about universities properly facilitating commercialisation so that scientists could concentrate on science. Most encouraging were her comments about Kim Carr’s attitude to science and his influence in the current government. Perhaps Science is in for a better deal than we have had for the past few years.

So, all in all, a positive experience. However it was notable that many Societies were represented by younger members and I hope that a **younger member of ASB** might represent us at the next SMP.

Angela Dulhunty

5. Australian Biophysicist in the News

“When many of us see a spider, our automatic response is to run away, especially if they’re big and hairy! Quite a natural reaction, given that spiders have evolved into such incredibly efficient killers over hundreds of millions of years.

However, our agricultural crops may soon benefit from a more eco-friendly and targeted pesticide, extracted from the venom of perhaps one of the most lethal spiders of them all – the Funnel Web.”

Research on funnel web venom, being undertaken by former President of ASB, **Prof Glenn King (Institute of Molecular Biosciences, Univ Queensland)**, was recently a lead story on the high media-profile science show, Catalyst, aired on ABC television in late March. Congratulations Glenn!

The transcript and a video of the story can be viewed at the ABC’s website:

<http://www.abc.net.au/catalyst/stories/2008/03/27/2200550.htm>

Other Upcoming Events 2008

1. The 9th International Congress on Cell Biology

Will be held at COEX, Seoul, Korea from **7 - 10 October 2008**.

Abstract **Deadline: 12 June 2008**

Early Registration **Deadline: 31 August 2008**

Website: <http://www.iccb2008.org/>

2. Prime Minister's Prize for Science, Science Minister's Prize for Life Scientist of the Year

Calls for nominations for Australia's national science and science teaching awards:

- Prime Minister's Prize for Science (\$300,000);
- Science Minister's Prize for Life Scientist of the Year (\$50,000);
- Malcolm McIntosh Prize for Physical Scientist of the Year (\$50,000);
- Prime Minister's Prize for Excellence in Science Teaching in Primary Schools (\$50,000);
- and
- Prime Minister's Prize for Excellence in Science Teaching in Secondary Schools (\$50,000)

Nominations close Friday 9 May 2008, 5.00 pm AEST

Further Information at: <http://www.dest.gov.au/scienceprize>

3. Fresh Science 2008

Nominations are now open for Fresh Science 2008.

This year Fresh Science will be held from 16 to 19 June 2008 in Melbourne. The event serves as a communications boot camp for early career researchers - getting their stories out to local, national and international media, and giving them essential communication skills.

16 early-career researchers will be selected and brought to Melbourne where they will receive media training and then present their work to the media, schools and the public. Now in its 11th year, Fresh Science is supported by the Federal and Victorian governments, New Scientist and Museum Victoria.

In essence, Fresh Science is looking for:

- early career researchers with an upper limit of five years post-doc and no lower limit
- with a peer-reviewed result which has had no media coverage
- with some ability to present their ideas in plain English.

Nominations close on **1 May 2008**. More information at www.freshscience.org

4. 2008 Australian Museum Eureka Prize for Scientific Research

Entries and nominations are now invited for the Eureka Prize for **Scientific Research**, one of ten prizes in the category of Research & Innovation in this year's Australian Museum Eureka Prizes, Australia's premier science awards scheme.

Sponsored by the University of New South Wales the Eureka Prize for **Scientific Research** is awarded to a researcher(s) for outstanding curiosity-driven scientific research.

Research entered may be an individual project or a body of work. In either case, the research is required to have been:

- Undertaken in Australia by an Australian scientist(s)
- Published in an internationally respected, externally-refereed scientific journal(s), book(s) or equivalent electronic publication(s), and
- Undertaken no more than 5 years before the closing date for entries.

The winner will receive \$10,000.

Entries CLOSE 2 May 2008

For further information on this prize, judging criteria, conditions of entry, and how to enter, see <http://www.amonline.net.au/eureka/go/eureka-prize/scientific-research>

or email: eureka@austmus.gov.au

5. 18th National Congress of the Australian Institute of Physics

Dates: 30 Nov – 5 Dec 2008.

Venue: University of Adelaide

Website: www.aipc2008.com



The AIP 18th National Congress is Australia's pre-eminent biennial meeting for physicists. The congress brings together a broad range of physicists from around Australia working in a variety of fields covered by AIP Topical Groups and Cognate Societies.

Biophysics, Medical Physics and Health Physics are traditionally well represented and the congress provides another important forum for networking within these communities.

The meeting appeals to both physicists working in the commercial sector by addressing challenging topical issues and also provides a discipline specific academic forum.

Plenary and keynote speakers include:

- Professor Oliver Jäkel, German Cancer Research Center.
- Professor Boris Martinac, University of Queensland.
- Professor Barry Allen, St Georges Hospital Cancer Care Centre.
- Dr John Loy, Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency.

Abstracts of between 200 - 300 words, in MS Word format, should be submitted through the above website by 30 June 2008.

Chair: Professor Roger Clay, University of Adelaide.

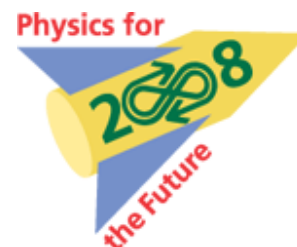
Program Chair: Dr Olivia Samardzic, DSTO.

Biomedical Physics Topic Chair: John Pattison, University of South Australia.

Congress organiser: Plevin and Associates Pty Ltd

Tel +61 8 8379 8222

events@plevin.com.au



6. HPBB 2008 – 5th International High Pressure Bioscience and Biotechnology Conference

Pressure is a fundamental thermodynamic parameter which influences all chemical processes through effects on system volumes and activation volumes. Elevated pressure has been exploited as a thermodynamic tool to explore the biophysical properties of proteins, lipids, nucleic acids and other macromolecules. It is used to explore the folding pathways of proteins, the volumetric properties of amino acids, the role of water in ligand binding, the nature of protein-nucleic acid interactions and the phase behaviour of membranes.

The HPBB 2008 meeting, with its designed mixture of basic and applied research, aims to accomplish the following:

Provide an update on the latest developments in HP food processing/microbial inactivation and associated regulatory issues

- Provide an update on basic HP biophysical studies
- Provide an update on organisms and ecosystems that are adapted to high pressure
- Provide an update on additional HP biomedical and biotechnological applications

- Provide information on new HP tools and resources
- Promote cross-fertilization of HPBB fields.

HPBB 2008 Conference will be held from 15 to 19 September, 2008 in San Diego, California. Further information about the conference can be found at <http://hpbb.ucsd.edu>.

2009

1. The Gage (Curtin) Conference on Ion Channels and Transporters

We are planning an [Australian Ion Channels and Transporters meeting for April 2009](#). The concept of this meeting is based largely on the earlier Curtin Conferences on Ion Channels and Transporters, organised by the late Prof. Peter Gage. In honour of Prof. Gage's contribution to this field of research, to the local scientific community and to establishment of these meetings, the new meeting will be named in his honour as the "Gage (Curtin) Conference on Ion Channels and Transporters".

The idea of the meeting will be to bring together the local community of researchers with interests in ion channels and transporters, at all levels from molecular mechanisms to cell biology, physiology, neurophysiology and disease, in a [relaxed low-key environment that encourages interaction and discussion](#). We also hope to attract some overseas speakers. Similar to the US Gordon Conferences the meeting will be based on a live-in eat-in format, maximising opportunities for interaction whilst making the meeting economical for participants. We are particularly keen to encourage participation by [students and early-career researchers](#) and provide an opportunity for them to present their work. Similar to the earlier Curtin conferences, the 2009 meeting will be held at the Canberra Boys Grammar School, during the April holidays and will probably be over three nights, with two full days and two half days at each end. The hope is that with sufficient interest and support, we will be able to establish a regular biennial meeting.

If you are interested in attending such a meeting, it would be a great help in our planning if you could contact us indicating:

- a) Your interest in attending and a potential number of attendees from your group.
- b) How well the time-slot from 15th-26th April 2009 suits you and preferred dates within that period.

Brett Cromer

On behalf of the organising committee, Angela Dulhunty, Louise Tierney, Jamie Vandenberg, David Adams and Daniel Markovich.*

Contact: *Brett Cromer, Heymanson Fellow*
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Notices & Special Reports - National News

1. Job Vacancies and Notices

We have implemented a Jobs page on the ASB website, which is being looked after very ably by Adelle Coster (jobs@biophysics.org.au). Please send notices to her.

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