

Dear NZMS members,

I trust that your plans to attend the 2008 NZMS conference in Christchurch are well advanced. Lynn McIntyre and her team are doing an excellent job organising what will be a very informative and enjoyable conference. The conference is undoubtedly the highlight of the NZMS year. I believe the way in which NZMS members promote and support our student members is fantastic. I thank you all for your support.

In my role as NZMS President I have on occasion been asked to comment on matters pertaining to microbiology in NZ and to nominate members for positions on "groups", representing microbiologists in NZ. Often I am only asked for a "name" once the incumbent retires, and the fact we have a NZMS member representing us on these bodies sometimes come as a surprise. Obviously, information on the appointment of members to various committees is not always passed on from year to year as the members of the NZMS Executive change. To rectify this we will soon have a section on our web-site listing our representatives on various groups. The representatives of whom we are currently aware are:

<b>Institution</b>	<b>NZMS Representative</b>	<b>Term</b>
NZ Royal Society	Phil Bremer	2007 - 2009
International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses	Vernon Ward	2008-2011
International Union Of Microbiological Societies	Iain Lamont	2001 -
American Society for Microbiology	Iain Lamont	2007 -

Full contacts details of the representatives are available from the NZMS web site. If you are aware of other NZMS members acting as NZMS representatives please let me know.

Special interest groups (SIGs) were created in 1997 to enable networking and encourage interaction between NZMS members with similar interests. The functions of these groups are to increase communication between group members, encourage collaboration between microbiologists, increase public awareness of microbiology by acting through the NZMS president, as media spokes-groups, contribute to the organisation of the NZMS Annual Conferences, arrange meetings in specialist areas of microbiology, disseminate information through the newsletter, liaise with the relevant Australian Society for Microbiology SIGs.

Currently there are eleven SIGs: Medical Microbiology & Infectious Disease; Education; Eukaryotic Microbiology; Food Microbiology, Water and Food-Borne Disease; Immunology and Serology; Industrial Microbiology and Biotechnology; Microbial Ecology; Microbial Systematics; Molecular Microbiology; Plant-Microbe Interactions and Virology. While some SIGs perform a valuable role and are active, most of the SIGs have been inactive for sometime. At our AGM in November, nominations will be called for the positions of Chair and Vice Chair for each SIG. It is likely that SIGs that fail to generate interest will be disbanded. I am happy to receive your comments on the retention or otherwise of a SIG or SIGs and would be delighted to receive nominations for the position of SIG chair or vice chair prior to the AGM.

I look forward to seeing you at the conference in Christchurch.

All the best.

Phil