

## **Presidents Report 2010**

Dear NZMS members,

Arrangements for the 2010 NZMS conference in Auckland are well underway. Many of you will have submitted abstracts and will know by now whether they have been accepted for oral presentations or posters. As I write, there are still a few days for early bird registrations and it seems to be worthwhile to take advantage of the reduced rates. Mike Taylor and his team have done a great job in organising what looks to be another great NZMS conference where they'll be much to discuss, both formally during the various symposia and less formally over a drink or two.

This year as usual we have offered grant in aid travel awards for our Masters and PhD students and several will have received notification of their successful applications by the time this goes to print. Sadly though, several applications were turned down for not meeting the various criteria. Some applications were from students that were not NZMS members or had been members for less than the stipulated 6 months, and other applications were late (by several weeks). In previous years we have been flexible in approving the travel awards, but this year it was exceptionally difficult to determine how flexible we could be to ensure that all ineligible applications were assessed objectively. Therefore we took the decision to adhere strictly to the criteria which are readily available on the NZMS website and we will be adopting this approach in future. We acknowledge that the student participation at the annual conference is a critical component of ensuring a successful meeting; someone has to ensure that the dancing at the Conference Dinner continues after 10pm when the less youthful have retired nursing ringing ears and a hot Milo. We want to give more travel awards to our student members; we have the finances to be able to do so and are committed to support their attendance at the NZMS meetings. We try and ensure that eligibility and application for the student travel awards is easy and so we propose that flyers are sent with the membership invoices next year to remind students and supervisors alike that eligibility for the student travel awards will be dependent on promptly enrolling as an NZMS member. We look forward to awarding many more travel awards next year.

I have a three year stint at steering the NZMS and hope to ensure that 'a steady as she goes' philosophy will ensure that I leave everything ship-shape. Luckily I have a very able-bodied crew that make traversing the relatively placid waters relatively easy. The current NZMS Executive committee is finely balanced with a healthy variety of expertise and opinions on all the various issues discussed throughout the year. Our Secretary Ralph Jack has re-invigorated the NZMS website, but as always, he is keen to post up-coming conferences, job advertisements and anything else significant up on the website to ensure it stays fresh. There has been a relatively smooth transition of Treasurers from Robin Simmonds to Richard Muirhead who has just about completed reconciling the various membership lists. This year Greg Cook is standing down as the Newsletter Editor and we are casting the net around to find a successor. Like for the website, contributions for the New Zealand BioScience magazine are most welcome and could be a conference travel report, a philosophical look at a topical microbiological question, or a review of a new piece of laboratory kit. We will be taking a more active approach to try and ensure that the new Newsletter Editor has contributions to the New Zealand BioScience magazine.

Already as NZMS president I have attended the Royal Society Constituent Organisations meeting and the Royal Society AGM, and urge you to visit the Royal Society website ([www.royalsociety.org.nz](http://www.royalsociety.org.nz)) for current Royal Society News and to obtain a better idea of the plans for the renovation of the buildings on the current Royal Society site in Wellington. The Royal Society has undergone some significant restructuring over the past year or two and now is looking to the future in its new form. Consequently, the NZMS has been invited to serve on the new Biological and Life Sciences Advisory Panel by Dr Stephen Goldson, Vice President (Biological and Life Sciences), who will chair the Advisory Panel. These Advisory Panels will respond to, and initiate contributions by, the Royal Society of New Zealand to critical public issues. No meetings have as yet been scheduled but I look forward to being able to contribute directly or with the assistance of other NZMS members.

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 is 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, and liaise with the relevant Australian Society for Microbiology SIGs. Several of the less active SIGs were disbanded in 2008, but several continue to thrive and have a valuable role to play. The NZMS is more than willing to provide support for SIGs or microbiology workshops in New Zealand and we were happy to support the NZ Microbial Ecology Network (aka Microbial Ecology SIG) meeting organised by Mike Taylor and hosted at Auckland University in February this year. An initial estimate indicated 30 to 60 attendees but in the end 93 attendees from 16 institutions got together for a very successful meeting. Hopefully there will be more workshops such as these that we can support.

I look forward to seeing you at the conference in Auckland in a few weeks time.

All the best.

Adrian.