

Victorian News

The Australian Society for Microbiology VIC Branch Newsletter November 2021, Vol 543



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2020-2021 Calendar

Event	Date
ASM2022	11 th July – 14 th July 2022
ASM Hour	7 th December
ASM Food Microbiology Special Interest Group Seminar Series	26 th November

Events

ASM Hour – Spotlight on our ASM Theme Leaders

7th December 2021



Q&A



Tues - 7th Dec

Spotlight on our ASM Theme Leaders

Chair: Kate Seib - Griffith University

Understanding how the MtrD efflux protein from
Neisseria gonorrhoeae exports multiple drugs
Melissa Brown- College of Science & Engineering, Flinders University
Molecular Microbiology Theme Leader

Addressing global challenges using one health microbiology
Chris Greening- Department of Microbiology, Monash University
Microbial Ecology & Environmental Microbiology Co-Theme Leader

So-called "atypical enteropathogenic E. coli
Roy Robins-Browne- Doherty Institute, Uni Melbourne
Clinical Microbiology Theme Leader

Registration for Zoom seminar is essential https://www.trybooking.com/BNBIO

Free for ASM Members \$5 donation for Non-ASM Members Registrations close 11am 7th DEC

For enquires contact: admin@theasm.com.au

ASM Food Microbiology Special Interest Group Seminar Series

26th November 2021

ASM Food Microbiology Special Interest Group Seminar Series

Friday, November 26, 2021 12:00 pm AEST (Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne) 11:30 am ACST (Adelaide, Darwin) 9:30 am AWST (Perth)

Biowarfare in foods – lactic acid bacteria to enhance food safety and reduce spoilage

The Speaker

12.50

Mark Turner, Professor in Food Microbiology University of Queensland



Mark is the Deputy Head of the School of Agriculture and Food Sciences at the University of Queensland, Australia. He leads a research team in the area of food quality and safety with current funding from the Australian Research Council. His current research focus is in lactic acid bacteria genetics, stress signalling, cheese cultures, anti-fungal and anti-pathogen (Salmonella and Listeria) biocontrol applications. He teaches into food microbiology, food safety and food biotechnology courses at UQ and is a Fellow of the ASM and AIFST as well as a member of the editorial boards of mBio and Journal of Food Protection. He was the recipient of the 2017 AIFST Keith Farrer Award of Merit.



If you are interested in any of the special interest groups, see https://www.theasm.org.au/special-interest-groups

Public Health Night – Event Report

Public Health Night 2021 was hosted by the ASM Victorian Branch and held online. The event was chaired by Professor Ben Howden, Director of the Microbiological Diagnostic Unit Public Health Laboratory (MDU PHL). Presentations on COVID-19-related topics were delivered by four excellent speakers from the Doherty Institute to over 60 participants. The following summaries have been provided by the speakers.

How has genomics helped during the COVID-19 pandemic? Ms. Courtney Lane (MDU PHL)

Genomic sequencing of SARS-CoV-2 has emerged globally as a key tool for the control of COVID-19. In Victoria, sequencing has been attempted on all positive samples during the pandemic to date. This rapid integration of comprehensive genomic and epidemiological data has provided critical insights into the transmission of COVID-19 and influenced public health actions and policies in Victoria. Uses of these data have included identification of interstate or introductions. identification transmissions without known epidemiological links, and resolution of complex or significant outbreaks, most notably the origins of Victoria's "second wave" through hotel quarantine breaches. Rapid interjurisdictional data-sharing via AusTrakka has been key to identifying spread between states and territories across Australia and New Zealand. As we move towards a reduction in COVID-19 control measures, increasing cases, frequent importations, greater genomic diversity and reduced public health actions, may necessitate a shift away from the existing focus on detailed understanding of individual transmission, towards sustainable, representative sampling and identifying genomic clusters of greater public health concern.

Laboratory Support of the SARS-CoV-2 Public Health Response in 2020 Dr. Mike Catton (VIDRL) L Caly, J Druce, J Roberts, K Bond, T Tran, R Kostecki, Y Yoga, W Naughton, G Taiaroa, T Seemann, MB Schultz, BP Howden, TM Korman, SR Lewin, DA Williamson, MG Catton

SARS-CoV-2 was isolated from a 58-year-old man from Wuhan, China who arrived in Melbourne on 19 January 2020 and was admitted to the Monash Medical Centre 5 days later with fever, cough, and progressive dyspnoea. A nasopharyngeal swab and sputum were positive for SARS-CoV-2 RT-PCR at VIDRL. Inoculation of Vero/hSLAM cells with material from the nasopharyngeal swab led to the isolation of SARS-CoV-2 virus in culture. Electron microscopy of the supernatant confirmed the presence of virus particles with morphology characteristic of viruses of the family Coronaviridae. Whole genome sequencing of the viral isolate and phylogenetic analysis indicated the isolate exhibited greater than 99.99% sequence identity with other publicly available SARS-CoV-2 genomes. Within 24 hours of isolation, the first Australian SARS-CoV-2 isolate was shared with local

and overseas reference laboratories and major North American and European culture collections.

Over subsequent weeks VIDRL supported Australian states, NZ, and near-neighbor countries with interim diagnostic capacity, while assisting Australasian laboratories to establish diagnostic capability. Through the first few months of the year in Victoria VIDRL supported diagnostic surges of up to 3400 SARS-CoV-2 samples/day for RT-PCR testing.

Tasked along with MDU by the Commonwealth Minister for Health with urgent surge capacity development projects, VIDRL did successful studies of pooled sample testing, extractionless RT-PCR testing, and later post-market test evaluation studies of the Beijing Genomics Institute (BGI) RT-PCR platform. As part of the DHHS Strategic Testing Initiative VIDRL has led development and validation of scalable salivabased testing and surveillance, together with research on 3D-printed consumables. Staff surveillance in Quarantine Hotels employing this saliva testing methodology went live in early December.

VIDRL also collaborated with Royal Melbourne Hospital on validation studies of serological test platforms and used this data to build a serology diagnosis and confirmatory testing algorithm.

Supporting the Australian COVID-19 response through model-based situational assessment Dr. David Price (University of Melbourne, Doherty Institute)

A key element of epidemic decision-making is situational awareness — that is, knowing the current and potential future status of the epidemic. Outputs from mathematical and statistical models have provided enhanced situational awareness governments throughout the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. Key analyses include estimation of the effective reproduction number (Reff) and forecasting of epidemic activity. Accurate and timely estimation of Reff enables the tracking and planning of progress towards the control of outbreaks. Short-term forecasts of daily case incidence and hospital bed occupancy provide information on future health system requirements, which supports both clinical and public health planning. In his talk, David described Australia's situational awareness modelling program for COVID-19, provided an overview of the modelling outputs government decision-making reported to key committees on a weekly basis (at least) since April 2020, and highlighted some challenges with providing near-real-time analytic support.



Lab in a Van: Taking testing to the people (hotspots) Dr. Susan Ballard (MDU PHL)

In the role as the Principal Scientist of MDU PHL, Susan provides support to the Director in meeting MDU's scientific, operational, and strategic objectives in the diagnosis and surveillance of communicable diseases. This includes resourcing of staff, identifying operational needs and the review of scientific processes and procedures. A key component of the role is to oversee the implementation of genomics as the main platform for service delivery within MDU PHL. Recently Susan has led a team at MDU focussing on Innovative Testing modalities for SARS-CoV-2 that are clinically and operationally appropriate to support the Victorian testing strategy. This has led to operationalizing mobile point of care testing capacity utilizing a laboratory van. Susan described the process of design, implementation, associated benefits, and challenges of the MDU LabVan to take testing to COVID hotspots which has included locations such as Bacchus Marsh, Shepparton, Bendigo and Mildura.



Microbial Art Prize 2021 Winners

We had so many fantastic entries into the microbial art prize this year and we thank everyone for their inventive and creative submissions.

It was a challenging task to select a winner but our winner of the 2021 ASM Vic Branch Microbial Art Prize is: Gene Drendel | La Trobe University

Winner

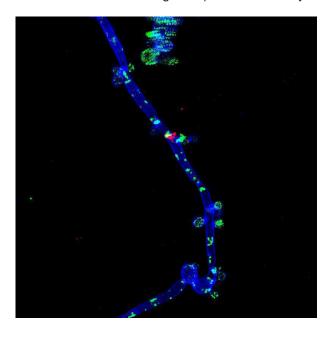
Title: "Microbes cultured from synthetic nectar"
Submitter: Gene Drendel | La Trobe University



Runner-up

Title: "Microbes cultured from synthetic nectar" **Description:** Gram-negative bacteria *Enterobacter cloacae* attached on the hyphae filaments of fungal *Candida albicans*, and this is represented by the green fluorescence of cocci shape on the filaments of *Candida*, represented by the blue fluorescence of the chitin cell wall.

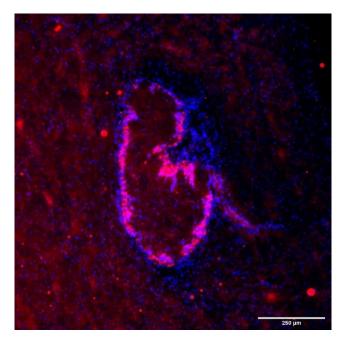
Submitter: Sheeana Gangadoo | RMIT University



Committee Favourite

Title: "Oh, baby! Viral infection in hybrid abalone!" Description: Halitoid Herpesvirus-1 (HaHV-1) kills approximately 90% of infected Victorian abalone, including Jade Tiger abalone (hybrid of Greenlip abalone (Haliotis laevingata) and Blacklip abalone (Haliotis rubra)). We aimed to image HaHV-1 infected abalone nerves, and have for the first time shown that the virus (red) localizes around the nerves. Nuclei are shown in blue.

Submitter: Angus Watson | La Trobe University



Save the Date ASM2022 11th-14th July 2022 Early Bird registrations are now open!



Microbial Genomics Workshop Series

Has Covid-19 affected your ability to complete all your lab work for that important project? Do you want to add some value to your lab work, or learn some new techniques? Then we have something for you.

The ASMVic Branch will be running a Microbial Genomics workshop over the summer under the theme "Improving your lab work with microbial genomics/bioinformatics". This workshop is aimed at laboratory researchers at all levels who would like to complement their laboratory work with some bioinformatics/microbial genomics, and there will be no command-line/coding used so it's a fantastic entry point if you have little to no experience.

This workshop provides an overview of:

- Strategies used to enhance laboratory work with bioinformatics/Microbial genomics
- Methods used to investigate the diversity and characterise a protein or gene of interest
- Methods for validating and confirming mutants and unexpected phenotypes.

Registration for this event will be open in January, If you have any questions for this upcoming event, please contact Jake Lacey at iake,lacev@unimelb.edu.au

ASM VIC Branch | Vol. 543 | November 2021

News and Views

Renew and Update your ASM Membership

The main objective of the Australian Society for Microbiology (ASM) is to advance the science of microbiology in Australia.

The society does this through the production and promotion of reading material, lectures, seminars, symposia and demonstrations on topics relevant to microbiology, as well as establishing and maintaining suitable standards for the practice of microbiology as a profession.

The ASM also promotes the awareness of microbiology and its role in everyday life, and actively liaises with governments and other professional bodies at both State and Federal levels in support of its members and the profession.

It's that time of year when your membership is due for renewal. Don't forget to update your details so you don't miss out on all the members benefits including:

- Reduced conference registration,
- Free entry to many of our Victorian branch events
- Access to the new online community
- Professional development opportunities
- Eligibility for many ASM awards

Don't forget to recommend your friends and colleagues to join us.

If you have finished your PhD and have been working for the last two years in the field of microbiology you should consider applying for a professional membership MASM.

Professional membership eligibility criteria:

- Completed an academic qualification in microbiology at degree level or alternative qualifications acceptable to the Council; and
- Have satisfactorily completed two years of postgraduate work to advance the discipline of microbiology.

If you meet these criteria, all you need to do it obtain a declaration form a referee who is a MASM or FASM finical member of the society, your curriculum vitae and academic record/copy of degree and submit online.

For more information see.

https://www.theasm.org.au/professional-membership-masm

If you have 10 years or more experience in the field of microbiology and are a ASM MASM you should consider applying to become a Fellow of the Australian Society of Microbiology (FASM)

Fellows of the Society are those microbiologists who, through a process of peer assessment, are determined to be either specialists in their field, or scientists who have made a significant contribution to the profession.

Fellowship is the higher qualification of the ASM which is granted by the Council on the recommendation of the National Examinations & Qualifications Board.

Fellowship eligibility criteria:

- A financial MASM member of ASM at the time of applying for the fellowship.
- At least 10 years' experience in the field of microbiology.

Required Supporting Documents:

- Curriculum Vitae, including details of your tertiary and other relevant qualifications, a list of your major publications.
- Completion of a FASM Referee Declaration (form downloadable below).

Further details can be found on the ASM National Website

https://www.theasm.org.au/fellowship-fasm-1

PhD Opportunity

La Trobe University Industry PhD Scholarship - Gut Microbiome Health



Project Title: Development of a Prevotella copri probiotic to combat the effect of western diets and restore a healthy gut microbiome.

Amount: \$28,597.00 per annum **Opening date:** 1/07/2021

How is it paid: Fortnightly stipend

Closing date: Until filled

Where is it available: Melbourne

Who is it for: Future PhD candidates, Australian Citizens, International Students, New Zealand Citizens, Permanent Residents.

Background

It has been well documented over recent decades that Westernized populations have high rates of allergic disease, particularly infants and children. The Barwon Infant Study (BIS) team discovered that maternal carriage of a specific bacteria, Prevotella copri (P. copri), during pregnancy strongly predicts the absence of food allergy in the offspring. This compelling finding has exciting public health implications, given the dramatic increase in allergic disease and the low rate of P. copri carriage in the Westernised world.

This project aims to conducted research into P. copri by examining the strains growth kinetics, developing a strain of P. copri with reduced antimicrobial resistance profile, and investigating the gut interactions and affects of P. copri in autism mouse models. This will provide a strong foundation for understanding the potential of P. copri as a probiotic to combat allergic disease restore a balanced gastrointestinal microbiota.

This PhD is funded by Prevatex Pty Ltd led by Prof Ashley Franks and supported by Adjunct Prof Craig Patch, A/Prof Steve Petrovski, and Dr Jen Wood at La Trobe University; Dr Elisa Hill at RMIT; and Dr Fiona Collier at Prevatex Pty Ltd. The successful applicant will be based at La Trobe Bundoora Campus and work closely with all investigators.

Graduates with a strong background in microbiology and experience in bioinformatics are encouraged to apply.

Benefits of the scholarship include:

- a La Trobe Research Scholarship for three and a half years, with a value of \$28,597.00 per annum, to support your living costs (2021 rate)
- · a fee-relief scholarship for up to four years
- relocation allowance and publication/thesis allowance
- opportunities to work with La Trobe's outstanding researchers and have access to our suite of professional development programs.

Are you eligible to apply?

To be eligible to apply for this scholarship, applicants must:

- meet the entrance requirements for the proposd course
- not be receiving another scholarship greater than 75 per cent of the stipend rate for the same purpose.
- In selecting successful applicants, we prioritise applications from candidates who:
- will be enrolled full-time and undertaking their research at a La Trobe University campus
- have completed a Masters by Research or other significant body of research, such as an honours research thesis or lead authorship of a peer-reviewed publication, assessed at a La Trobe Masters by research standard of 75 or above.

How to apply

- review details on how to apply for candidature
- contact the project supervisor, Professor Ashley Franks (a.franks@latrobe.edu.au), with any enquiries or to express an interest in the project.

• when you have received in-principle agreement for supervision, complete and submit your application for admission into La Trobe's PhD program, indicating you wish to be considered for this scholarship on the application.

The University will carefully review your application and consider you for this scholarship. You will be advised of an outcome.

Contact for further information:

Professor Ashely Franks

Pro Vice Chancellor Research Capability, La Trobe University

a.franks@latrobe.edu.au

PhD Opportunity

La Trobe University Industry PhD Scholarship - Gut Microbial Metabolites



Project Title: Characterizing microbial metabolites as

drivers of microbial function

Amount: \$28,597.00 per annum **Opening date:** 1/07/2021

How is it paid: Fortnightly stipend

Closing date: Until filled

Where is it available: Melbourne

Who is it for: Future PhD candidates, Australian Citizen, International Student, New Zealand Citizen, Permanent Residents.

Background:

It is now well established that the gastrointestinal microbiome plays an important role in modulating the nervous system as well as the immune system however the precise biological mechanisms remain to be clarified. Recent work has convincingly shown that metabolites produced by microbes gastrointestinal tract alter the brain. Although the majority of microbes are present in the faeces, a substantial proportion of the microbial population are embedded in the mucus biofilm of the gastrointestinal tract in close proximity to the mucosal epithelium as well as immune cells and the enteric nervous system. The characterization of both the structural components and functional outputs of the microbiome within this biofilm will improve our understanding of the physiological interactions involved in this complex ecosystem.

This project aims to conducted research into the interactions between the host and the microbiome in the context of autism, through the use of mouse models. Experiments will focus on microbial profiling of different regions of the gastrointestinal tract and the biogeographical effects of metabolite treatment on the

gastrointestinal mucosal biofilm. This will provide a strong foundation for understanding relationship between metabolites and the gastrointestinal microbiota as well as characterize the microbial population of the gastrointestinal mucus biofilm.

This PhD is funded by Axial Biotherapeutics Australia Pty Ltd led by Prof Ashley Franks and supported by Dr Stewart Campbell, Dr Anya Shindler and Dr Jen Wood at La Trobe University. The successful applicant will be based at La Trobe Bundoora Campus and work closely with all investigators.

Graduates with a strong background in microbiology and experience in bioinformatics are encouraged to apply.

Benefits of the scholarship include:

- a La Trobe Research Scholarship for three and a half years, with a value of \$28,597.00 per annum, to support your living costs (2021 rate)
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Contact for further information:

Professor Ashely Franks

Pro Vice Chancellor Research Capability, La Trobe University

a.franks@latrobe.edu.au

The ASM online community



We are excited to launch the ASM online community to members. A space where you can communicate to individuals or your special interest groups, share branch events, post announcements such as employment opportunities and scholarships, or request protocols and strains.

Now you don't have to wait for the next meet-up to connect with other members.

Please log in, explore, set up your profile and introduce yourself in one of our forums.

To login:

- Go to: https://community.theasm.org.au/
- Click the "Sign in" button located at the top right corner.
- The first time you login you will need to set up your password. Click the "Can't access your account?" link.
- Enter the email address on file with ASM and then click the "Send Password Link" button.
- Check your email for the link to set up your password.

How to Book your COVID-19 Vaccine

Victoria's vaccination centres are offering all healthcare workers the Pfizer vaccine, regardless of your age. To book your priority appointment, call 1800 675 398 and mention you work in the healthcare sector.

Please note: People who have already received a first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine should receive a second dose of AstraZeneca. Thank you for your continued support of the COVID-19 vaccine rollout



For people yet to receive their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, the following groups are eligible to receive Pfizer vaccine, regardless of age:

- all health care workers (i.e. eligible under Phase 1A and 1B).
- all hotel quarantine and red zone airport and marine port border workers
- household contacts (those living in the same primary residence) aged 16 years and over of hotel quarantine and border workers
- residential aged and disability care workers (nursing, personal care, allied health, and kitchen, cleaning, laundry, garden and office staff) and residents.

Contact and Society Details

Vic Branch Committee

Chair: Catherine Satzke

(catherine.satzke@mcri.edu.au)

Deputy Chair/Public Health: Andrew Greenhill

(Andrew.greenhill@federation.edu.au)

Secretary: Sarah Baines (bainess@unimelb.edu.au)

Treasurer: Chris Stubenrauch

(christopher.stubenrauch@monash.edu) Immediate Past Chair: Karena Waller

(klwaller@unimelb.edu.au)

Communications and Marketing (incl. Newsletter Editor): Jake Lacey (jake.lacey@unimelb.edu.au),

Louise Miles, (lo.miles@alfred.org.au)

Committee Members: Maria Liaskos

(M.Liaskos@latrobe.edu.au), Seema Kanade (seema.kanade@dorevitch.com.au, Mary Valcanis (valcanis@unimelb.edu.au) Priscilla Johanesen (priscilla.johanesen@monash.edu), Steve Petrovski (Steve.Petrovski@latrobe.edu.au), Harshini Weerasinghe

(harshini.weerasinghe@monash.edu.au), Sam Manna (sam.manna@mcri.edu.au), Andrew Greenhill (Andrew.greenhill@federation.edu.au)

Committee Working Groups

One Health: <u>Jake Lacey</u>, Chris Stubenrauch, Mary

Valcanis, Steve Petrovski.

Medical Microbiology: <u>Sarah Baines</u>, Seema Kanade, Louise Miles, Sam Manna, Harshini

Weerasinghe, Jake Lacey

Regional Engagement: Andrew Greenhill, Catherine

Satzke, Steve Petrovski

Skills, Education, Engagement and

Communications: <u>Sam Manna</u>, Priscilla Johanesen, Karena Waller, Seema Kanade, Lauren Zavan, Harshini Weerasinghe, Maria Liaskos, Harshini Weerasinghe.

Submissions: Deadlines for ASM Victorian News is the 5th of the Month. All notices should be emailed to Jake Lacey (jake.lacey@unimelb.edu.au),

Find us on:

Website: http://victoria.theasm.org.au/

Twitter: @ASM_VicBranch

Facebook: The Australian Society for Microbiology

(ASM) - Victorian Branch





Becoming a Member: Did you know that non-members can join the Australian Society for Microbiology at a reduced rate? Well, you can! As a non-member, by paying the fee to attend an event hosted by ASM VIC Branch, you can use this amount to put towards an annual membership of the Australian Society for Microbiology.

To do so, please follow these instructions:

- Register to attend the event hosted by ASM VIC Branch via the advertised trybooking link and pay the attendance fee.
- Attend the event, and then within 2 weeks after the event, go to the ASM membership area at https://www.theasm.org.au/membership
- Choose the appropriate membership for you and then click on: <u>Click here to join or update your</u> details
- 4. Click 'Begin here' and create a Currinda membership profile for yourself. Then, pay the membership full fee.
- Following payment, download the paid receipt (showing your payment) and email it along with your postal address to: Christine Seers, Treasurer VIC Branch caseers@unimelb.edu.au
- 6. A cheque refunding the event fee will be posted to you.

<u>Please note</u> you must complete the above process within 2 weeks following an event to take advantage of this offer. After this time, the event fee cannot be used to pay membership fees.

Upgrade to a professional membership (MASM): to be eligible for MASM, you must have: Completed an academic qualification in microbiology at degree level or alternative qualifications acceptable to the Council; and have satisfactorily completed two years of postgraduate work to advance the discipline of microbiology. If you meet these criteria, all you need to do it obtain a declaration form a referee who is a MASM or FASM finical member of the society, your curriculum vitae and academic record/copy of degree and submit online. For more information see. https://www.theasm.org.au/professional-membershipmasm

Visiting speakers' program (VSP): Do you know of an outstanding speaker coming to Australia? If so, consider them for the Visiting Speakers Program (VSP). This program is now coordinated by the ASM Executive standing committee and the National Office in consultation with State branches. For more information, please contact Lauren Zavan (I.zavan@latrobe.edu.au), who is the VSP Coordinator for the ASM VIC Branch.

Organising events: The main objective of the Australian Society for Microbiology is to advance the science of microbiology in Australia. The ASM Victorian Branch is keen to support local initiatives, with the potential to advertise or co-organise events. If you are organising a microbiology-focussed event or have an idea for a type of event that would appeal to the broader microbiology, please contact us to discuss the ASM Vic Branch may be able to assist. Please contact Catherine Satzke (catherine.satzke@mcri.edu.au) for more information

Advertisements: Would you like to advertise your event, job vacancy or other news item in our newsletter? If so, please contact Jake Lacey (jake.lacey@unimelb.edu.au) Advertising rates are: Not-for-profit adverts: free of charge and For-profit adverts: \$50 per advert.

ASM History SIG: If any ASM members have significant ASM memorabilia that they would like to the donate to the ASM archives or would like to suggest topics suitable for possible symposia at future ASM Annual Scientific Meetings, please send details of the memorabilia or suggested symposia topics to:

History SIG convener

c/o Australian Society for Microbiology Office, 9/397 Smith Street, Fitzroy VIC 3068

ASM National Office:

9/397 Smith Street, Fitzroy VIC 3065

Tel: 1300 656 423 Fax: 1300 655 841

Email: admin@theasm.com.au
Weblink: http://www.theasm.org.au/

ABN 24 065 463 274

Victorian Branch ASM:

The Australian Society for Microbiology

Victorian Branch c/o: 9/397 Smith Street, Fitzroy VIC

3065

Weblink: http://victoria.theasm.org.au/ Email: catherine.satzke@mcri.edu.au or

asmvicbranch@gmail.com

A list of the other ASM branches can be found online at http://www.theasm.org.au/