

JAMS 7th Annual Symposium – 21st March 2018

By Dr Carly Rosewarne

The 7th Annual Joint Academic Microbiology Seminars Symposium, held each year in Sydney, brings together a group of like-minded researchers for a program jam packed with talks and posters covering the latest discoveries in microbiology. First cab off the rank was Mike Manefield from UNSW. Given his involvement with JAMS from the beginning and his passion for all things microbiology, it came as no surprise that his talk was both whimsical and comprehensive. Mike covered a lot of ground in a short space of time, including highlights from Matthew Lee's work on microbial organohalide respiration for bioremediation of sediment in the nearby Botany Bay, through to Sabrina Beckmann's project using neutral red to enhance methane production by *Methanosarcina*.

Next up was Caroline Chénard from Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, the first of two international speakers. Caroline talked about her research on the effects of nutrient availability on marine viral communities in the Singapore and Johor Straits, which she has studied using a hybrid Illumina/Nanopore sequencing approach. The final science talk before the much anticipated poster session was delivered by Chris Greening from Monash University, who explained how some microbes are living on air by scavenging atmospheric gases in order to survive. Following Chris' presentation was a short talk on the EMCR Forum which serves as the voice of Australia's early- and mid-career researchers, championing improvement in the national research environment through advocacy. The focus of the Forum is on sustainable and transparent career structures, diversity and inclusion, stable funding policies, professional development opportunities, and raising awareness of issues facing the future of science.

Following the poster session Talitha Santini from UQ spoke about her research in the traditionally male dominated mining sector, and how microbial communities are being engineered to bioremediate abandoned sites. Finally, Rytas Vilgalys from Duke University in North Carolina delivered a fascinating talk about the "wood wide web" – communication and coevolution between forest trees and their symbiotic fungi. At the conclusion of the talks, the group meandered up the road to Harpoon Harry hotel for dinner. After a quick drink or two to get started, the organising committee had some presentations to make, including the student poster prize supported by ISME, which went to Vanessa Pirotta from Macquarie University for her poster describing the use of drones to collect microbes from whale snot.

